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PARSONS

(Robert)

HIS

Christian Directory:

BEING A

TREATISE

OF

HOLY RESOLUTION.

In TWO PARTS.

Put into Modern English.

And now made Publick,
For the Instruction of the IGNORANT;
The Conviction of the UNBELIEVING;
The Awakening and Reclaiming the VICIOUS;
And for
Confirming the RELIGIOUS in their good Purposes.

By *GEORGE STANHOPE*, D. D.
Late Dean of *Canterbury*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to HIS MAJESTY.

The SEVENTH EDITION, *Corrected.*

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THE PREFACE.

THE Book, of which this is an Abrigdment, hath obtained ſo juſt an Eſteem in the World, for its Piety and Uſefulneſs, that it will be needleſs to ſay any thing in Commendation of it. And therefore the only thing I think incumbent upon me at preſent is, to account for the Alterations made in that Form, under which it now appears to the Reader.

The very conſiderable Changes which have happened to many of our modern Languages, and particularly the great Improvements made in the Engliſh *Tongue, within the laſt Century, are a mighty Prejudice even to the moſt valuable Things written before that Time. No Weight of Matter, or Beauty of Thought, is ſufficient to procure them that good Acceptance with the generality of Readers, which they would not fail to find, if dreſſed in a more modiſh Garb. And therefore the making ſuch Writers ſpeak, as if they had lived and converſed with us at this Day, (while the Force and Subſtance of what they ſay is preſerved entire,) is ſo far from an Injury, that, I preſume, it will be allowed a Kindneſs and Advantage. And this hath been attempted in the preſent Tract with due Fidelity, where the Matter was eſteemed either profitable, or neceſſary to the main Argument, and ſerving the Intereſts of true Religion, and a good Life.*

The only Difficulty seems to be, how I shall justify those Differences between this and some of the former Editions, where several Things are wholly omitted, and such as the Author, no doubt, thought very material to his Design. And here I shall make no Scruple to declare wherein I have varied from him, and the Motives for my doing so; by no means despairing, that the Reasons, which persuaded me to make such Alterations, will prevail with others, who shall consider the Case without Prejudice, not to disapprove them.

My general Intention of reducing the Christian Directory *into a narrower Compass, is, that it may be more suitable to the Memory and the Leisure of vulgar Readers. And the Effect hath so far answered, that it is less by one Third than the Original Treatise. But then this Abbreviation hath not been made at all Adventures, nor any one Point, that I know of, rejected, which may be of Service for exciting Men to that* Holy Resolution, *proposed as the End of composing the Whole. The Matters passed over being such, as seemed either* (1.) *Superfluous, or* (2.) *Insufficient, or* (3.) *Erroneous. And consequently, nothing of the true Weight is taken away by this Proceeding, but the Argument remains more just, more unexceptionable, and more perfect, without them.*

1. *Under the* First, *I comprehend several Prophecies out of the Old Testament, which do either not at all, or in a very remote Sense, concern the Things which this Author hath produced them in proof of: Several Quotations out of the ancient Fathers, the Substance whereof is abundantly expressed in those which I have retained; several Examples out of Ecclesiastical History, wherein the Virtues of good, or the Punishments of wicked and obstinate Men are represented. And here I have generally contented myself with such Instances of each kind as the Holy Scriptures have set before us. And indeed, under all these Heads, care hath been taken to lay down the most direct and significant Passages, after which the rest*

reſt might very well be ſpared; and which (if any Thing will) might ſuffice for the Purpoſes that all of them were intended to ſerve.

2. *To the* Second *may be referred thoſe Teſtimonies in favour of the Chriſtian Religion, which are taken from the Sibylline Oracles, and other Writings of ſuſpected Credit. Theſe I have but ſlightly mentioned, and ſo as to lay no particular Streſs upon them. It being a manifeſt Injury to a Cauſe which needs them not, when we produce Authorities juſtly queſtioned, where there is ſufficient Proof from ſuch as are unconteſtable, to ſupport it againſt the Objections of any fair Adverſary.*

3. *The third are chiefly concerned in the Chapters of Faith, good Works, and Purgatory; wherein the Doctrines of the* Romiſh *Infallibility, Satisfaction by Penance and Alms, and the temporal Puniſhment of Sins, whoſe eternal Puniſhment is remitted, are treated of, according to the Principles of this Father and his Society. And herein I have caſt out what was peculiar to the* Romiſh *Communion, and reſerved ſo much only as might be ſuppoſed to come from the Pen of a Chriſtian Prieſt at large. This I foreſee is like to give greateſt Offence to a ſort of Perſons, whoſe Eagerneſs for a Party in Religion diſpoſes them to reſent it very heiniouſly, that we ſhould pretend to enjoy the Advantage of what makes for Chriſtianity, in common, without being content at the ſame time to ſwallow all that is interſperſed for the Intereſt of ſome particular Denomination of Chriſtians. But I hope this will appear to be no unreaſonable way of proceeding, when we have attended a little to the two following Arguments.*

Firſt, *This Cavil ſeems to come very ungracefully from the Members of a Church, which hath given the Countenance of Publick Authority to* Indices Expurgatorii; *whoſe moſt eminent Champions have forged falſe, and preſs'd the true Fathers into their Service, by making ſome ſpeak who never broke Silence, and*

others ſay what they never meant, for maintaining a Cauſe too feeble to ſtand upon the Baſis of genuine and uncorrupted Writers. And there is a mighty Difference, I take it, between modelling Ancient and Modern Authors; between making the One of a Party, and to vindicate Tenets which they knew nothing of, and the Other, deliver only ſuch Things as all Chriſtians are unanimouſly agreed in. If F. Parſons *do not ſpeak here as a Papiſt, yet he is not made to ſpeak as a Proteſtant; that is, he ſays only ſuch Things as ſuit a good Chriſtian at large, without engaging in ſuch others, as diſtinguiſh him to be of any particular Sort, and relate to controverted Points, foreign to practical Religion, and too evidently deſtructive of it. This for the Perſons objecting; and then,*

Secondly, *For the Objection itſelf; If this Author hath acquitted himſelf well in theſe Doctrines of univerſal Allowance and Uſe, why ſhould he be deprived of the Glory, or the World of the Benefit which may come from theſe, by ſeparating the Gold from the Droſs, and giving the Reader his Morality pure without the Allay of his Errors? I call them ſo, becauſe they have been abundantly proved ſo, by a great Number of Treatiſes unanſwered, and I verily believe unanſwerable. And I leave them out, becauſe it ſeems to me a Thing much to be wiſhed, that they, who write for the Benefit of Religion and Chriſtians, in common, would confine themſelves to thoſe Heads of Faith and Practice plainly deducible from Scripture, without perplexing the vulgar Reader with the conteſted Points of particular Communions. This would render ſuch Books of more general Advantage, and prejudice none againſt them, who are of a true Piety and Zeal, whatever their Education or Perſuaſion may have been, as to the leſs neceſſary and diſputed Matters. And I am not ſenſible of any Thing contained here, that ſhould give juſt Scandal to any good Chriſtian of what Sect or Character ſoever.*

It had been an eaſy, but I think not ſo fair a way of proceeding, to have formed a general Syſtem of Faith and Manners, out of this Directory; *and have offered it under another Name. Nay there want not ſeveral Treatiſes of this Nature compoſed by Proteſtants; nor need we, God be thanked, have Recourſe to any Church beſides our own, for Directions how to believe and live as becomes us. But I was deſirous, an Adverſary ſhould not be defrauded of the Reputation due to him; and the parts which are ſuppreſſed, I look'd upon as his Blemiſhes and Miſtakes, the covering whereof, as it is an Act of Charity to the Reader, ſo I make no doubt, but* εἰ τις αἴσθησις, *if the Souls departed have any Senſe of what we are doing upon Earth, the Author eſteems it a good Office done to himſelf too. For we are mightily miſtaken, if we imagine, that the Points of which Men of differing Opinions contend ſo eagerly here below, are of that Concern to the Bleſſed above, which they ſeem to Us. In thoſe happy Regions, where perfect Peace and Concord, Holineſs and Zeal for God's Glory reign, there is more Joy at the Converſion of one Sinner, more Praiſe for the pious Labour of one little Tract, which makes Men good Livers, than for the winning Proſelytes to this or that Communion, (as diſtinct from the reſt that diſagree with it in leſs ſubſtantial Niceties) than for vaſt Volumes of ſubtle Diſputants, which make for the Intereſt of any of thoſe Factions, into which* Chriſtendom *is ſo unfortunately divided.*

More a great deal might be ſaid upon this Occaſion; but thus much ſeems to be enough, for all who are rather deſirous of Edification than Wrangling. Upon the whole, I am not conſcious of any real Injuſtice done to the Original. And, Fame being not any of the Motives, which induced me to undertake this Work; I ſhall not be much concerned for the Reputation, but am very ſeriouſly ſo for the Succeſs of it. And therefore to my Endeavours I add my moſt hearty Prayers, that it may have the good Effect, *which, by the Aſſiſtance*

of God's Grace, I think it very capable of, To turn Men from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; *that ſo true Religion may get ſome Ground, (even by my poor Labours) in our degenerate Age; and both I, who would gladly contribute toward, and they by this Means come into, ſo truly Chriſtian a Deſign, may hereafter meet in the everlaſting Glory of our dear Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* Amen.

THE

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A TREATISE CONCERNING Holy Reſolution.

CHAP. I.

The Miſchief and Danger of Inconſideration.

THE Goodneſs and great Compaſſion of God for the Souls of Men, among many other Inſtances, is eminently viſible in this, that he hath made choice of ſuch proper and likely Methods of ſaving them. For the Prophets and Meſſengers, ſent from time to time to warn Sinners of their Danger, have not only reproved their paſt Wickedneſs, and foretold the diſmal Conſequences of it; but have likewiſe been careful to diſcover the Cauſes of their Diſeaſe, and ſo to direct Men how ſuch Inconveniences might be remedied, and ſuch Wickedneſs prevented for the time to come.

Now, of all the Cauſes, which contribute either to the drawing Men into Sin at firſt, or to the confirming them in the Habits of it, or hardning them in it finally to their utter and eternal undoing; none is more general, none more frequently charged in Scripture, than the want of Conſideration. Thus *Iſaiah* complains of his People, *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib; but* Iſrael *doth not know, my People doth not conſider*; and he denounces

Iſai. i. 4.

Iſai. v. 12, 13, 14. denounces a Woe againſt them, for that *the Harp and Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine, were in their Feaſts; but they regarded not the Work of the Lord, nor conſidered the Operation of his Hands: Therefore my People*, (ſays he) *are gone into Captivity, becauſe they have no Knowledge: Therefore Hell hath enlarged herſelf, and opened her Mouth without meaſure, and their Glory, and their Multitude, and their Pomp, and he that rejoiceth, ſhall deſcend into it.* Thus Senſuality and Pleaſure brought theſe Men to Inconſideration, and Inconſideration brought them to the very brink of Hell; they periſhed by not attending to God's dealing with Sinners; and forgot thoſe Judgments in the Heat of their Jollity, which afterwards they felt to the Manifeſtation of his Juſtice, in the Eyes of all the World; for ſo it follows, The *Lord of Hoſts ſhall be exalted in Judgment, and God that is Holy ſhall be ſanctified in Righteouſneſs.* ver. 16.

Nor was this *Iſaiah*'s complaint only, or the Caſe of *Judah* or *Iſrael* alone, but all the other Prophets expreſs themſelves in like manner, concerning other States and Countries flouriſhing at that time, as *Babylon*, *Ægypt*, *Damaſcus*, *Tyre*, *Sidon* and *Moab*; all whoſe Sins and temporal Puniſhments were ſo many Figures of ſenſual and ſinful Souls laid to ſleep; and led on blindfold to the Gates of Hell, by the like wretched Careleſſneſs; which never ſuffered them to ſee their own Danger, till it was too late to prevent it.

For, what Account but this, can we give of thoſe many, who at this day, do, as *Job* ſays, *drink Iniquity like Water*, and (as St. *Paul*) *commit all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*, who ſeem to have loſt all Remorſe of Conſcience for the moſt abominable, the moſt notorious Wickedneſs, and to lie under the ſame groſs affected Ignorance of God's Juſtice, and their own Condition! May we not to every ſuch Sinner apply that Lamentation of our Lord over *Jeru-*

Jeruſalem, If *thou didſt but know* what hangs over thy Head for this careleſs Life of thine; if thou wouldſt at all reflect what will be the End of theſe unlawful Pleaſures, it would damp all thy Delights, and put an effectual Check to ſuch deſtructive Indulgence; *But now theſe things are hidden from thine Eyes.* Luke xix.

Not but that thou mighteſt have known them if thou wouldſt; but becauſe thou art one of them who ſay to the Almighty, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways:* Who *will not underſtand nor ſeek after God*, who *turn away their Ears from hearing God's Law*; and conſequently one, not only whoſe Life, but whoſe very *Prayer*, is *an Abomination* to thy Maſter and Maker; *therefore theſe things are hidden from thine Eyes.* Job xxi. 14. Prov. xxviii. 9.

And what indeed can be more provoking, than this contemptuous Behaviour? That the Majeſty of the great God ſhould publiſh a Law, with ſo ſtrict a Charge for us to learn and conſider it, to ſtudy and meditate upon it Day and Night, at home and abroad; when we lie down and when we riſe up; to make it our Diſcourſe, our Exerciſe, our Delight; and yet We, notwithſtanding all this, ſhould ſo ſlight that Law, as to allow it no Place at all in our Thoughts, nay to decline the Knowledge of it with great Induſtry, as we ſee many do, for fear of creating Diſturbance to their Conſciences.

Cauſes of Inconſideration.

1. For Wickedneſs, as the Wiſe-Man moſt truly obſerves, *is very timorous, being condemned by her own teſtimony*; this made St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe of *Righteouſneſs*, and *Temperance*, and *Judgment* to come, agree ſo ill will *Felix*. He pretended indeed a Deſire of hearing him farther upon theſe Matters, when he ſhould have a more convenient Seaſon. But why that Seaſon never came, *Joſephus* may inform us; who ſays that *Felix* was a very wicked Man, that *Druſilla* was not really his, but another Perſon's Wiſ. xvii. 11. Acts xxiv. Joſeph. *Antiquit. l.* 20. *c.* 5.

Perſon's Wife, from whom he had enticed, and brought her off from her Huſband by violence; and therefore thoſe were tender points, and ſuch as *Felixs* his Conſcience could by no Means reliſh or digeſt. And I make no doubt, but one very common Cauſe, why the Men of this World ſo little conſider their Condition and their Duty, is from a Fear, leſt they ſhould thus be brought to ſee and to condemn thoſe Faults, which they cannot prevail with themſelves to forſake, and therefore chuſe to continue inſenſible of.

2. A ſecond Cauſe of Inconſideration the Scripture hath taken notice of, not much different from the former, which is, that of worldly Men, being totally immerſed in the Cares and Pleaſures of this Life, ſo that the Thoughts of God, and their Spiritual Concerns, are utterly ſhut out, and thus the Soul hath no room left for her own proper Buſineſs. Thus *Jeremy* complains, that after all his Preaching, *No Man repented him of his Wickedneſs*, ſaying, *What have I done?* but *every one turned to his Courſe, as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battel.* By which Compariſon the Holy Ghoſt gives us a lively Repreſentation of that eager Fury and Greedineſs, with which Men purſue the Pleaſures or Advantages of the preſent World, when their Affections are once ſet upon them, and how very hard it is to ſtop their obſtinate Career, or recover them to a better Mind and Senſe of Things.

Jer. viii. 6.

3. A third ſort of Inconſideration there is, which proceeds neither from a ſettled Purpoſe to do ill, nor from any great Engagements which divert Men from doing better, but rather from a certain Levity and unthinking Temper of Mind, which troubles itſelf with nothing that is ſerious and weighty, but *accounts Life a Paſtime*, and ſeeks nothing above Recreation. Theſe Men are as full of Security, as highly contented with themſelves, as tho' they had all the good Works of the beſt Men to produce in their Juſtification.

tion. And this is the very Extremity of Vanity and Deluſion. For, as in the Affairs of this World, that Merchant would be accuſed of great Folly, who ſhould never inſpect his Accounts of Profit and Loſs; and that Maſter or Pilot were deſervedly condemned, who minded nothing but Feaſting on Board, and in the mean while ſuffered his Veſſel to drive, whereſoever Wind and Tide ſhould carry her: So much more in the Buſineſs of the Soul, is He chargeable with Folly and Madneſs, who refuſes the trouble of Conſideration and Care; becauſe the Damage and Calamity conſequent upon ſuch Neglect, is much more dreadful and unretrievable, than any temporary Loſs can poſſibly be. For alas! there will come a Time, when ſuch Men muſt ſee and underſtand their Miſery, whether they will or no. Even then when, as the Prophet ſays, *The whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, and it ſhall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked; in the latter days they ſhall conſider it.* Jerem. xxx. 23, 24.

Now the Conſideration I would exhort Men to, is not every cold or ſlight Thought, but ſuch an ardent and earneſt Application of Mind, as anſwers the weighty Purpoſes about which it is to be employ'd. It is ſuch a Thoughtfulneſs as firſt and principally looks to the State of our own Soul. No Man is truly Wiſe, who is not wiſe for himſelf. All Wiſdom and Knowledge without this, tho' otherwiſe never ſo profound and large, is a Building without a Foundation. All Conſideration ſhould begin and end in ourſelves. And if this might have due place in the World, few Souls would be loſt. Our Lord commends the unjuſt Steward, for his prudent Foreſight of that Poverty, which he ſaw approaching, when he ſhould be called to Account, and put out of his Maſter's Service. And from thence we may eaſily gather, how much more grateful it would be to our great Maſter in Heaven, if We who are Stewards of his Talents in this Life, Luke xvi.

would ſeriouſly conſider our preſent Eſtate, and make a wiſe Proviſion for the Time, or rather for that vaſt Eternity, to come.

And if this Matter were rightly ſtated, I cannot but think the two main Inlets to Perdition or Salvation hereafter, are *Conſideration* and *Inconſideration*. Should we aſk moſt of thoſe unhappy Spirits, now doom'd to everlaſting Miſery, what was the Original of their Ruin and Torment, they would anſwer, *Inconſideration*. For ſo the Wiſe Man introWiſd. v. duces them ſpeaking, *We fools counted the good man's life madneſs*; which is in effect to confeſs, that they never conſidered his or their own Converſation before. Again, if we enquire of the Bleſſed in Heaven, what was the firſt Step to their Converſion in this World, and from that to their Happineſs in the other; they would tell us, it was ſome pious Thought well improved, and cloſely followed while upon Pſal. cxix. Earth. *I thought upon my own ways*, ſays *David*, *and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies*. And oh! How happy, how ſeaſonable was that Thought, which wrought ſo bleſſed a Change, and thereby gained a Crown of eternal Glory!

SECT. II.

That Conſideration muſt deſcend to Particulars.

BY this you ſee, of how great Uſe and Efficacy Conſideration is to our Amendment in this, and Ezek. xviii. our Salvation in the next World. The Prophet *Ezekiel* indeed makes it the Beginning of all our Virtue, and the forſaking of all our Vice. For having ſhewed at large, that every one ſhall bear his own Burthen, and that each ſhall die for thoſe Sins only which himſelf commits: He acquaints us by what Means it is, that a bad Man becomes good; declaring, that the *Penitent ſhall ſave his ſoul alive*; Why? Even *becauſe he Conſidereth*, and *Turneth away from*

all his Tranſgreſſions. Which is an Expreſſion very emphatical, and intimates, that none but they who do not *Conſider*, will continue in a wicked Courſe, and ſo periſh everlaſtingly.

The wicked Lives of Chriſtians can hardly be imputed to any other Cauſe, than either Infidelity, or Inconſideration; and ſince we cannot reaſonably ſuſpect the *Firſt*, the Charge will lie upon the *Second*. That is, Men believe in general, that there is a God; that he rewards the Good, and puniſhes the Evil; that there is a Heaven, and a Hell; and a Judgment to come, and the like; but they never enter far into theſe Matters, nor apply them to their own Caſe in particular; nor trouble themſelves to think, which of theſe is like to be their own Portion; and ſo the Doctrines, thus looſely entertained, have no effect upon their Lives and Actions; which is the true Reaſon why they live in ſuch Inconſiſtence with their Profeſſion. For though the Articles of our Belief be of themſelves moſt forcible Motives to Piety and Virtue, yet if the Powers of the Mind be not exerciſed upon them, if they be not diligently looked into, frequently contemplated, and warmly applied, the Virtue they have will not exert itſelf, but remains as void of Effect, as the moſt ſovereign Medicines, whoſe greateſt Excellence can have no Succeſs, unleſs the Patient take them, and the Drugs mingle and incorporate with his Blood and Humours. An Example or two will make this matter plain.

How few are there, who do not believe they ſhall die, and after Death be judged, yea, and be damned if they Live and Dye in their Sins? And how few are there, who live as if they believed theſe things? And whence is this? Becauſe they believe theſe things looſely and in general Terms, but never bring them home to themſelves. The Man believes he ſhall Die, but he does not conſider when, nor where, nor how ſhortly, nor how miſerably he may Die,

and ſo he is not affected with that Thought. But did he look upon Death as a thing ready at hand, that he were now juſt at the Point of it, and could no longer eſcape; did he reflect what a Condition he ſhould be in at that laſt Hour, what Grief, what Fears, what Pangs he ſhould endure in the painful Paſſage; what a diſmal State of Horror awaits him afterwards; and that not for a Year or two, or twenty, or a thouſand, or a million, but for all Eternity; that he is this Moment ready to be laid in his Coffin and his Grave, there to be gnawed and devoured by Worms, and never more to appear in Fleſh, but at the great Day of univerſal Judgment; he that conſidered theſe things ſeriouſly, and purſued the Thought, and ſpent ſome time in it, and imagined Death and Judgment preſent; (for here is the fatal Deceit, that a few Years, nay ſometimes a few Months or Days, are eſteemed a great Diſtance of Time;) this Man would feel himſelf moved after another manner than he is, only by talking of the Matter in general. He would find ſome good degree of *David*'s Warmth, when *the Fire kindled* within, and would, I doubt not, reap the ſame good Effects of it, by *taking heed to his ways*, and reſolving *not to offend in his tongue.*

Pſ. xxxix.

But, becauſe we think not at all, or but ſeldom and very ſlightly of theſe Matters, therefore theſe Principles are without any Profit entertained by us. We are as Men that have Souls, and know them not; Underſtanding, and uſe it not; Memory, and remember not themſelves, and their own greateſt Good and Evil; Wills and Affections, but apply them not, except to Trifles and Vanities: In ſhort, as Men quite beſides themſelves, Stupid, Aſleep, and Dead, for want of the Life and Spirit of true and active Conſideration. This is the greateſt Folly we can poſſibly be guilty of, the heavieſt Calamity that ever can befal us.

Since

Since then Conſideration is ſo profitable, ſo neceſſary a thing, I thought fit to begin with urging and recommending This, as a requiſite Preparation for the following Parts of this Treatiſe. For without this, neither any thing I have ſaid already, nor all I ſhall or can ſay, will have any Effect at all. We find by daily woful Experience, how many Millions of Men are not one whit the better for ſo many good Books, ſo many excellent Sermons, ſo many virtuous Examples, ſo many terrible Chaſtiſements upon Sinners, as every Day preſents them with. They want either the Will, or the Leiſure; they dare not, or they have not the Grace to conſider them, but paſs over all with Neglect or Diſdain, and labour to divert their Eyes and Ears and Thoughts with Objects grateful to Fleſh and Senſe; and drive away all ſuch Reflections as would give them any (tho' it were a moſt profitable) preſent Uneaſineſs.

But ſince, as the Prophet *Jeremy* hath forewarned us, we ſhall one Day be compelled to ſee and conſider theſe things, when it will be too late to reap any Benefit by our Knowledge; how much better were it for every Man to do that by Choice, to his Salvation and unſpeakable Comfort, which he elſe muſt do by Force, without any Advantage, and with inexpreſſible Grief and Remorſe? Let us then take St. *Paul*'s Advice, *Redeeming the time*; and Eph. v. 16. not running headlong with the World into Deſtruction. Let us ſtop a little, and aſk ourſelves what we do, whither we are going, and where all this will end at laſt. Borrow ſome Time at leaſt from thy Mirth and thy Company, from thy Pleaſures and thy Buſineſs; for this well employed would make thee good amends, and give thee Cauſe of Joy and Laughter, when thy jolly Friends, who refuſe the like Conſideration, may perhaps mourn and weep without Hope or Comfort.

And for the promoting and aſſiſting thee in this good Work, I have put into thy Hands the follow-

ing Conſiderations: The Sum of all which may be reduced to two Heads, the Knowledge of God, and of ourſelves. *This is life everlaſting* (ſays our Bleſſed Saviour) *to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent*; that is, ſuch a Knowledge of God, as the Chriſtian Religion teaches us. And from hence we ſhall learn to know Ourſelves too; for, as in Philoſophy one Contrary tends to the Illuſtration of another, ſo here the Knowledge of Almighty God, and his moſt eminent Perfections, leads us by a reflex Act to know ourſelves, our Infirmities, and Frailty, and extreme Vileneſs.

John xvii. 3.

Now the Nature and Eſſence of God is a Knowledge too excellent to be attained in this Life: And therefore all we can reach to here is to know him by his Attributes and Perfections; His Majeſty, and Mercy, and Judgments; His Hatred againſt Sin, and Love to good Men; His Benefits and Promiſes to all Mankind; His Grace, his Will, his Commandments; His Threatnings; His Dealings with others that have gone before us; to what End He created and placed us in this World; what Duties we are obliged to; what Helps we have toward the performing them, and what Hindrances we muſt be careful to avoid. All which the following Chapters ſet before us, and ſo teach us to know God and ourſelves aright. Read then, Chriſtian Brother; but read not haſtily, or for mere Curioſity: The Matter requires Attention, and Leiſure, and diligent Application: It is the weightieſt thou canſt poſſibly take in hand, the very ſame which Chriſt hath called the *One thing needful*, and all other things in this World, when put into the Balance with it, are in compariſon as nothing, altogether lighter than Vanity itſelf. Reflect then, how careful thou wouldſt be in examining the Writings and Evidences of a Mortgage or an Eſtate; and be not leſs ſollicitous to ſecure a Treaſure of much greater Value; for

for be aſſured, that the Importance of what thou art now going about is no leſs, than either thy Life or Death everlaſting.

CHAP. II. SECT. I.

That there is a GOD, *rewarding Good and Evil.*

IT is uſual in all other Arts and Sciences, to lay down ſome Principles without any Proof, and to take them for granted; becauſe they are ſuch, as either the Learner is preſumed to know before, or elſe are ſo plain and ſelf-evident, that the mention of them alone makes them ſufficiently underſtood.

The Apoſtle intimates to us, that the ſame Method obtains in Divinity too. For by ſaying, *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*; he ſuppoſes two Principles, in which a Man muſt be ſatisfied, before he can ſeek or draw near to God. The firſt is the Exiſtence, the ſecond the Juſtice, of God; that he *is*, and that he *is a Rewarder*. Heb. xi. 6.

And theſe indeed are Principles, ſo evident in themſelves, and which ſeem ſo wrought into the Frame of every Man's Mind, that were not the Wickedneſs of the Age we live in loſt to all Shame, it were not only needleſs, but a ſort of affronting the ſober Senſe of Mankind, to begin a Chriſtian Tract with the Proof of theſe two Points. But ſince Impiety hath ſo lift up her Head, as not only to offend and deſpiſe, but even to deny our Maker, the better to countenance Sin, and to ſtifle the Worm of Conſcience; I am under a Neceſſity of beating Men from this deſperate Refuge, by laying before them the inconteſtable Evidence of theſe two Truths: which have ſo cloſe a Dependance upon each other, that if

the *firſt* be proved, the *ſecond* plainly follows. For, admitting that there is a God, whoſe Providence governs and takes care of all whom he hath created, the Conſequence is not to be avoided, that he is concerned to recompence the ſame Perſons, according as they ſhall have deſerved well or ill at his Hands.

Firſt then, for Proof of this Principle, *That there is a God*, I need only refer Men to their own Senſe and Reaſon. I would deſire them to look upon the World where God hath drawn himſelf, as it were, in Images ſo lively, and imprinted ſo many, ſo legible Characters of his Perfections, that the plaineſt Man alive may read and underſtand them. Hence it is, that the Wiſe Man long ſince complained of the extreme Folly of thoſe *vain People who continued ignorant of God*, and *could not out of the good things that are ſeen, know Him that is; nor by conſidering the Works, acknowledge the Work-maſter: Since by the Greatneſs and Beauty of the Creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is ſeen.* Hence St. *Paul* tells the *Romans*, that *the inviſible things of God are clear from the creation of the world, even his eternal Power and Godhead; ſo that they were without excuſe.* Theſe, like a Ray of Light ſhining into a dark Place through a ſmall Chink, lead us to that Sun, from whence this Beam deſcends. And, if a Man, caſt upon ſome foreign barbarous Shore, where no living Creatures but Beaſts appear, would, upon the Sight of ſome exquiſite Building, make no difficulty to conclude, that ſome Man had been there, becauſe a Creature void of Reaſon could never have finiſhed ſo artful a Compoſition: Shall we behold this World, a Work ſo full of Wonder, and not confeſs a wiſe Artificer, who fram'd it with ſuch aſtoniſhing Order and Art? Can we lift up our Eyes to the Heavens, that Sky of vaſt Extent, that Ornament of Stars and Planets innumerable, thoſe Motions ſo different, ſo unequal, and yet ſo regular, as not to change their Courſe, or ever to obſtruct each other,

Wiſd. xiii. 1, 5.

Rom. i. 20.

other, and not confeſs with *David*, that the *heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy Work?* Can we deſcend to this Earth on which we dwell, and obſerve the Bulk, the Beauty, the Variety of it; its Mountains and Valleys, its gay Cloathing of Graſs, and Herbs, and Flowers: the Rivers which run like Blood in the Veins of this Huge Body; the Riches of its Fruits, the Strangeneſs of its Situation, hung like a Ball in the midſt of the Air, without Pillar or Baſis, and not aſk ourſelves that Queſtion, *Who hath laid the meaſures thereof, or who hath ſtretched the line upon it? Whereupon are its foundations faſten'd, or who laid the corner-ſtone thereof?* Can we once more, obſerve the Sea, which begirds this dry Land round about, that Scene of more Wonders than Tongue can expreſs, that Gulf into which all Rivers are perpetually flowing, always full and yet never running over, that reſtleſs Ebb and Flood of contending Waters, that dreadful raging Element, that ſwells, and roars, and threatens to devour and ſwallow up the Earth at once: And, though it be ſituated above it, and makes daily Aſſaults upon it, yet ſuddenly recoils from its appointed Borders, where there is nothing to check or dam it up; can we, I ſay, obſerve all this, and not reflect, as God inſtructs *Job*, *Who ſhut up the ſea with doors, when it brake forth as out of the womb! I eſtabliſhed for it my decreed place, I have ſet bars and doors, I have ſaid hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no farther, and here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtayed.*

Pſal. xix. 1.

Job xxxviii. 5, 6.

Chap. xxxviii. 8, 10, 11.

This Evidence we have from things without us, but if we would ſeek God nearer home, we cannot fail to find him within our own ſelves. Every Part and Member of theſe Bodies are ſo many Miracles preaching their Maker to us. And when St. *Paul* ſpeaks to the *Athenians*, of ſeeking *the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live,*

Acts xvii. 27, 28.

live, and move, and have our being; his meaning is, that, by conſidering the Works of God, and eſpecially the Wonders of human Nature, we may come to ſo clear a perception of God, as even in ſome ſort to be ſaid to feel and handle him. So jointly do all things concur to the manifeſtation of their Maker; ſo effectually do they demonſtrate and copy out to us their great Original. Nothing is ſo little, as not to declare his Greatneſs; nothing ſo great, as not to confeſs its Subjection to this Sovereign Lord; nothing ſo low, as not to lead us up to his Majeſty; nothing ſo high, as not to deſcend to our Capacities for teaching us this Truth.

It were endleſs and needleſs to produce all that might be alledged in confirmation of this Principle: A Principle ſo evident, that no Man of Learning ever ſtood out againſt it; but all conſidering Perſons, in all Ages, and Places, have been driven by the manifeſt Evidence of Truth, to own, *That there is a God.* If it be objected, that we have ſome Inſtances in Story, of Men who openly diſavowed this Belief; I anſwer, that ſome of thoſe were ſcandalouſly ignorant and ſenſual, rather to be reckoned among Beaſts than Men; and that others of better Underſtanding did not ſo much deny the Being of one true God, as expoſe the Vanities of Pagan Idolatry, and refute the many falſe Gods then worſhipped by the common People.

Diog. Laer. *l.* 2. c. 4.

But the Truth is, moſt of thoſe reputed *Atheiſts* did not deny God in Opinion, ſo much as in Fact: They were Men of Senſuality and Sin, whoſe *God was their belly*, and their Pleaſure; and therefore ſuch as St. *Paul* ſays, *Live without God in the world.* And yet theſe very Perſons, ſo loth to confeſs God in their better Circumſtances, in Times of Diſtreſs, and at the approach of Death, were as forward in acknowledging and calling upon him for help, as any other People whatſoever. But for Men of Judgment,

Phil. iii. 19.

Eph. ii. 12.

Lactant. Inſtitut. *lib.* 3.

ment, and Learning, and Sobriety, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*, they never had any doubt of this matter, but diſcerned abundant evidence for it; ſuch particularly as I ſhall now produce in the following Part of this Chapter.

SECT. II.

The Arguments by which the Heathens proved, that there is a God.

THE moſt Eminent for Learning and Judgment among the Heathens, were thoſe Perſons commonly called Philoſophers. Of which there were *Four* principal Sorts, diſtinguiſhed by the ſeveral Sorts of Science they profeſs'd. Theſe were the *Natural*, the *Moral*, the *Metaphyſick*, and *Mathematick*. The *Three* former have each their proper Proofs for the Exiſtence of God. The *Fourth*, not concerning itſelf with efficient and final Cauſes, (under which two Reſpects only God is only knowable to humane Reaſon) hath no Proofs peculiar to itſelf, but borroweth from the other *Three*.

Among other infinite Arguments to this Purpoſe, Natural Philoſophy inſiſts upon theſe *Three*, as the Principal Heads to which the reſt are reducible: *Motion*, the *Final*, and the *Efficient Cauſe*; the Force whereof may appear by the following Examples.

That taken from Motion proceeds upon this Axiom, *That whatſoever is moved, is moved by ſomething elſe:* And in Motion this is farther obſervable, that one Thing moves in Subordination to another. And here the old Philoſophers thought theſe Sublunary Bodies moved by the Influence of the heavenly, and thoſe again by the higheſt Orb of all, called therefore the *Firſt Moveable*; beyond which they could go no farther among created Beings.

The

The Queſtion then is, Who moves this *Firſt Moveable?* To ſay it moves itſelf, is againſt the Axiom laid down before; to ſay, it is moved by ſome other, not only contradicts its being the *Firſt*, but brings back the ſame Queſtion, *Who moves that?* And this Difficulty muſt remain, till you come to ſomething which moves itſelf, and is not moved by another. But this muſt be ſomething above created Nature, and is that which we call *God.* This was eſteemed a Demonſtration, and illuſtrated by *Plato* and *Ariſtotle* by the Inſtance of a Clock, where the Hammer ſtriking ſhews the next Wheel, and that the next, and ſo from one to another through the whole Engine, till at laſt the Motion of all the Wheels be reſolved into the Clock-maker himſelf. The Conſent and Subordination of this Motion is compared by *Ariſtotle* to a Choir, where the *Præcentor* gives the Key, and the reſt ſtrike in with their reſpective Parts, to make one perfect Harmony. And thus God in the Creation is ſuppoſed to have ſet the *Firſt Moveable* going; That, to have communicated the Motion thus received to all other Bodies; which ever ſince continue to move in ſuch Order, and Concord, as is convenient for the Preſervation and good Government of the whole Maſs. And thus a God is proved from Motion.

Plat. *de Leg. l.* 10. Ariſtot. *Phyſ. l.* 8. *c.* 5.

Ariſt. *de Mundo.*

That of the *Final Cauſe* ſtands thus. Experience ſhews that every Creature is by Nature appointed to aim at ſome End: (As the Bird in building her Neſt, and the Fox in making his Den, and the like.) Now the Enquiry ariſing from hence is, who appoints and directs that Nature, which directs each particular Creature. And this is not capable of any other Anſwer, than that Nature is directed by ſomething above it. And that which is ſuperior to Nature is no other than God.

Philo *de Opificio Mundi.*

Then for the *Efficient Cauſe*; the Corruptions, Alterations and perpetual Motions of created Beings, argue them to have had a Beginning. And no Philo-

Philoſopher but *Ariſtotle* ever diſagreed to this Principle; nay, even he relinquiſhed his ſingular Opinion of the World's Eternity, and confeſſed the contrary at laſt, in his Book to *Alexander*. Now whatever had a Beginning muſt have an *Efficient Cauſe*. It could not make itſelf, for that is to give it a Power before it was, and to ſuppoſe it to be and not to be at the ſame time. The Whole could not be made by any Part of itſelf: This is yet more abſurd; and we may as well pretend, that the Finger made the Body, before it was a Finger or Part of the Body. Hence then it follows, that ſomething more excellent than the whole World, or any Part of it, made the World; and That Being, more excellent than the whole World, and the Maker of it, is but another Name for *God*. Such convincing Arguments does Reaſon and the Contemplation of mere Nature furniſh for the Exiſtence of God, abſtracted from all the Light and Aſſiſtance of Revelation and Faith.

Plutar. *de Plac. Phil.* Ariſt. *Phy. l.* 8. *de Gen. & Cor.* 1. Ariſtot. & Plotin. *de Mundo.*

The Metaphyſician pretends to treat of higher and more abſtracted Matters, and therefore the Subject before us falls more properly under his Conſideration, and he hath greater Variety of Arguments to prove it by.

1. *Firſt* then he tells you, that every Finite Being muſt needs proceed from ſomething elſe, which ſets thoſe Bounds and Limits, in which the Finiteneſs of its Nature conſiſts. And ſince in this World there is not any thing which is not ſo bounded, we muſt of neceſſity admit ſome infinite Maker, who limited theſe Creatures at Pleaſure; as a Potter frames the Veſſels turned by him, in Shapes and Proportions agreeable to his Fancy, and to the Uſes he intends them for: *Whatever is by participation*, he ſays, *muſt be referred to ſomething which is not by participation, but of itſelf*. Now thoſe Things are ſaid to be by Participation, which have not the utmoſt Degree of Perfection, but are capable of Addition

dition or Increaſe. But all the Creatures and Parts of the World are thus. They are Finite in their Nature, they have only a limited Perfection, they may have Additions made to them; therefore they muſt be all reſolved into ſome Infinite and abſolutely Perfect Cauſe ſubſiſting of itſelf; and this is God. For He only is of endleſs Perfection, and from that unexhauſtible Store communicates to his Creatures their reſpective Perfections; which are but ſo many little Particles of his own, and are to be referred thither at laſt, like Beams of Light to the Sun, or Rivulets to their common Source.

2. It is another Principle in this Science, That *All Multitude and Diſtinction proceeds from Unity.* The Motions of the lower Orbs come from the Moving of that One Higheſt of all; the innumerable Rays of Light from One Sun, many Boughs from One Stock, the Veins, and Arteries, and Nerves, from One general Trunk common to each: The Infinite Operations of Reaſon, and Senſe, Generation and Corruption, Digeſtion and Nouriſhment, and Ten thouſand particular Actions and Motions, different in their Kind, admirable in their Order, diſtinct in their Offices, all take their Beginning from One moſt ſimple and indiviſible Subſtance, the Soul, which produces, and governs, and directs them all, in their innumerable, different, and contrary Functions. And if this be the Caſe of each particular Creature with its reſpective Unity, the whole Creation, (which conſiſts of ſo many Millions of Multitudes in their Unities,) muſt in all Reaſon be referred to One moſt Simple and Abſtracted Unity, which gave Beginning to them all; and this is God.

3. This is urged again from that Subordination of the Creatures, whereby each plainly ſerves others, and all conſpire together for the common Good. Thus the Heavens move without ceaſing, but not for themſelves; the Water moiſtens, the Air cools and cheriſhes, the Sun warms, the Moon and Stars

ſhed

ſhed their Influence, the Wind refreſhes, the Earth receives theſe Benefits, not for her own Convenience, but to bring forth Food; She feeds Cattle, and they feed Man. Imagine then a well appointed Army, in Rank and File, all moving one Way, turning together, mutually aſſiſting one another in ſome common Deſign; and, if it would be abſurd to think this Union and Agreement did not proceed from Order, Diſcipline, and Obedience to ſome Commander in Chief; learn from hence the prodigious Folly of ſuppoſing the much more wonderful Conſent and Subordination of the Creatures not to proceed from the Diſpoſal of ſome Wiſe and Univerſal Governor and Creator, who appoints to each its Taſk and Station, by the Obſervance whereof the Safety and common Advantage of the Whole is thus regularly conſulted.

4. A *Fourth* Reaſon to this Purpoſe is, That marvellous and inimitable Art and Forecaſt, that Order and Uſefulneſs, that Beauty and Proportion, obſervable in every the leaſt Part of even the leaſt, and in common Eſteem, moſt Deſpicable Creature.

Inſomuch, that if all the World ſhould lay their Heads together, they could not with their utmoſt Contrivance make a Gnat, or a Flea, or a Leaf of a Tree. Such Proportion of Parts, ſuch Variety of Colours, ſuch Diſtinction of Offices, ſuch Correſpondence of Inſtruments; and all theſe ſo fitted, ſo nicely framed to ſerve each other, that there are more Miracles than Members, and the more you contemplate, the more you will ſtand amazed. This could never be the Work of Chance, as *Lucretius* fondly imagined, for Chance proceeds not by Rule, and Method, and Certainty: Such Productions, ſo far exceeding not only the Skill, but even the Comprehenſion, of the wiſeſt Man, declare a Provident and Powerful Artificer. This Argument converted *Galen*, and forbad his irreligious purpoſe

De Uſu Par. *l.* 3.

purpoſe of aſcribing the Praiſe of ſuch Workmanſhip to Nature any longer. This made a Heathen Platonick after long ſearch into theſe Matters cry out, *I will praiſe God in what I underſtand, and will admire him in what I do not. For I often do Things for which my Servants conceive no Reaſon; and I ſee Children deſpiſe Jewels, and burn good Books, merely becauſe they have not Capacity enough to underſtand the true Worth of them.* And indeed, nothing is a more effectual means to inſpire us with the Love and Admiration of our Great Creator, than a frequent Contemplation of his Works. That Heart muſt be prodigiouſly hard and ſtupid, that can exerciſe itſelf in theſe, without feeling ſtrong and laſting Impreſſions of Religion left behind.

Plot. *de Prov.*

5. One Argument more under this Topick is the Immortality of the Soul; a Thing generally received from the Antients, upon the Account of its being an Immaterial Subſtance, and Independent upon the State of our Mortal Body. And this appears, from its being often more vigorous in Age and Sickneſs, more active and clear and pregnant in feeble and decaying People, than it ever was in Time of Youth, or when the Conſtitution and Health was ſoundeſt. Thus again it was believed Immortal and Immaterial from its eager and inſatiable Thirſt after Wiſdom and Knowledge, and never being contented with bodily Pleaſures, or any other ſenſible Object. From whence the Philoſopher inferred, that ſome other Satisfaction is prepared for this Soul in another State; and that ſo excellent, that all Wiſdom, and Knowledge, and Beauty, and whatſoever creates Love, and Joy, and Content ſhall be her Portion, wherein ſhe ſhall delight and reſt herſelf for ever. Now if the Soul be immortal, he that made it muſt be ſo; and to that Maker it muſt return, after its Departure out of this Body. Which ſeems to be the true Meaning of that old Doctrine, concerning the Common

Common *Soul of the World*; from whence ſome Philoſophers held all Particular Souls to come, like Sparks from the Fire, or Rays from the Sun; and at their Separation to be re-united to, and remain with that General Soul to all Eternity. All which comes very near to that of the Preacher, *The Spirit ſhall return to God, who gave it.* And thus much ſhall ſuffice for the Metaphyſical Proofs of a God. Themiſt. *De Anima.* Plutar. *De Placit. Philoſ.* Eccleſ. xii. 7.

I have reſerved thoſe of Moral Philoſophy for the laſt place, becauſe they are plainer and eaſier than the former, and lie more level to the Capacity of the mean and unlearned Reader.

1. The *Firſt* of theſe is that natural Inclination and Diſpoſition, even in the worſt of Men, to confeſs ſome Divine Power. This is evident from the Conſent and Practice even of the rudeſt and moſt barbarous Countries; from the common Way of lifting up Mens Eyes and Hands to Heaven in Times of Diſtreſs and Surprize; nay, even from the Confeſſion of Atheiſts themſelves, when under any grievous Calamity, or at the Approach of Death, as *Seneca* declares; and the Example of *Caligula* ſhews, that ſuch are moſt fearful of an avenging Power in their Miſery. Which could not be, if Nature and Conſcience did not force the Senſe of a God upon them. This laſt is ſo ſubſtantial a Proof, that *Zeno* preferred the Confeſſion of an Atheiſt, before the Diſputes of the moſt Learned Philoſophers. Becauſe Men in Extremity ſpeak the true Senſe of their Souls, and have put off that Vanity and Ambition, that Hypocriſy and Diſſembling, which they uſed in oppoſing a Deity before, when Health and Proſperity, Liberty and Wantonneſs had emboldened them.

From hence the Moraliſt advances to the Proof of *One only God*; for God muſt be Infinite, and Infinite but One can be: Two cannot ſtand together, Infinite can admit of no Rival, no Equal. That this Unity was received by the Heathens, he argues, with

Inſtit. l. 2. c. 2. *Lactantius*, from their addreſſing to one God, in their Oaths, Imprecations, Prayers, and ſolemn Wiſhes; eſpecially when vehement, and in any Affliction. That tho' the Learned and more Judicious complied with the vulgar Errors, yet *Plato* makes it a Mark of his being ſerious, that he then mentions God in the ſingular Number. That *Socrates*, pronounced by the Oracle the Wiſeſt Man in all *Greece*, was put to Death for expoſing the Multitude of the Heathen Gods. *Ariſtotle* reſolves all into *One Father of Gods and Men*, the Creator and Preſerver of all Things; and ſays, the Plurality of Gods was invented only to expreſs the different Powers and Perfections of this *One God*, by the Variety of his Benefits and Miniſters: So that he makes all Gods but One, to be Servants. *Zeno* urged, that *either there is One God, or no God*. *Plutarch*, and *Seneca*, and *Epictetus* affirm, that there is One God; that this God governs, and his Providence is over all; and lay this down for the firſt and fundamental Article of Reaſon and Morality. In ſhort, he who deſires farther Satisfaction in this Point, may find it in St. *Cyril*'s Book againſt *Julian* the Apoſtate, and *Lactantius* his Firſt and Second Books againſt the *Gentiles*. And thus the Moraliſt's *Firſt* Argument is ſupported by the Inſtinct of Nature, the Force of Conſcience, the Cuſtom of all Nations, the Conſent of all wiſe Men agreeing in a God, and in One only, who made and governs the World.

Ep. 13. *ad Dionyſ.*

De Mund. Juſtin. *in Apolog.*

2. The *Second* is taken from the ultimate End or chief Good of Man. Which is a Conſideration peculiar to moral Philoſophy; in regard that Science undertaketh to lead Men to that End for which they were created, the utmoſt Happineſs they are capable of, to which they tend in this Life, and in which they reſt without farther Proſpect or Deſire, when once they have obtained it. In order to our underſtanding this Matter, we are to obſerve, that Philoſophers thought every thing to have ſome particular

End, and a constant Appetite and Tendency to that End. This in inanimate Creatures they defined to be those Motions and Operations to which Nature determined them; in Brutes, the Gratification of their Senses: But in Man, who is by Reason distinguished from Brutes, some higher and more excellent Object. For since we feel by Experience, that our Mind is oftentimes not quiet, even when our Senses are fully satisfied; this argues sensual Delight not to be that chief Good, in which our Soul can rest and enjoy its perfect Felicity. Hence grew those infinite Disputes, and various Opinions, concerning the final Felicity of Mankind: But *Plato*, upon a full Examination of the matter, declared, that nothing in this Life could be our chief Good; because he was able to demonstrate, that none of those things pitched upon by Philosophers could satisfy the Desires of the human Soul. Not Riches, for these are uncertain, mutable and vain; and often involve us in more Danger and Trouble than Poverty. Not Honours, for these are equally vain and inconstant, and depend upon the Humour and Breath of others. Not bodily Pleasures, for these are common to us with Beasts, and leave a strong and nauseous Distelish behind them. Not moral Virtues, for these consist in a perpetual Conflict with our Passions, which are eternally disturbing our Repose: In short, whatever we fix upon here, it fails us, it yields no lasting Satisfaction in this Life, and therefore we must be content to wait for our compleat Happiness in a Life to come. So that Reason and Morality could go thus far, that Men cannot be perfectly happy in this present State; nay, these prove, that this Happiness of the Soul in the Life to come must be a spiritual and immaterial Object, because the Soul is a Spirit; and that it must be Immortal, because the Soul itself is so. And, which is yet more surprising, and gives *Plato* Right to be called *Divine*, he tells us, *it consists in*

In *Phædon.*

Plat. *Phæd.*

being inſeparably united to God: This is the Sum and Complement, the utmoſt Aim and End of all Bleſſedneſs. What could any Chriſtian ſay more? And yet a Heathen Scholar of *Plato*'s explains his Maſter thus, *The ultimate End of Man is his ſovereign Good, and that is no other than God.* So that even Pagans could prove and find out God, by the Conſideration of the chief Good of Man; which was the *Second* Argument I propounded, to prove the Exiſtence of a Deity, under this Head of moral Philoſophy.

Plotin. *Enn* 1. *l.* 4. *c.* 1.

3. The *Third*, and laſt I ſhall mention, is deduced from Virtue and Vice, and the Rewards and Puniſhments, by Nature, Equity and Reaſon, due to them.

For, as in all other Acts and Effects of our great Creator we can plainly diſcern Proportion and Order, Juſtice and Wiſdom, and a careful Providence; ſo we may be aſſured, theſe Meaſures will be kept more eſpecially in his Dealings with Man, the Best and Firſt of all his other Creatures in this lower World.

Now other Creatures, we plainly perceive, are directed by Nature to their proper Ends, and while they hold this Courſe, they are as happy as their Capacity will admit; but when they deviate from that, Damage, and Sorrow, and Loſs is their Portion. Man only hath Reaſon to know and judge what he ought to aim at, and Freedom of Choice to purſue this by Virtue, or ſwerve from it by Vice. Equity then and Juſtice require, that they who keep the right Way by living well, ſhould be rewarded with Happineſs, and attain their true End; and that thoſe who abandon it for ſenſual and ſinful Pleaſures, ſhould be puniſhed for ſuch wicked and perverſe Choice. But in this World many notorious evil Men are leaſt puniſhed: Some are too great and powerful to be corrected by the Hand of Men; and ſome again, in low and afflicted Circumſtances, have no other Return here for their Virtue and Patience, and ſtrict Honeſty, but Envy and Malice

Socrat. *in Apol.* Plato *in Crat. & Gorg. & Phæd. & l.* 10. *De Leg.* Plut. *De ſera Numinis vindicta.*

Malice, Reproach and Contempt, Injury and Oppreſſion. So that, either Providence, which is nice juſt in Matters of leſs Moment, is wretchedly defective in this great Concern; or elſe there muſt be Place and Time reſerved for Rewards and Puniſhments in a future State, and a Juſt and Powerful Judge to make amends for the unequal Diſtributions of Good and Evil, permitted in this preſent World. And that Judge can be none but the Creator himſelf.

Thus I have ſhewed, how the Contemplation of the Creatures, and the undeniable Evidence of Reaſon, led the Heathen, who had no other Guides, to the Knowledge and Confeſſion of God. My next Undertaking will be to obſerve how the *Jews*, before Chriſt's Coming, were able to confirm this Truth, and to convert the Heathen to the Belief of their *One true God*.

SECT. III.

The Proofs of a God peculiar to the Jews.

NOW here we muſt make a Difference between ſuch Arguments peculiar to the *Jews*, as were proper to ſatisfy and confirm one of their Brethren, and thoſe which would be fit to bring over a Heathen to the Faith. Of the former Sort they had many. The Creation of the World by One God; The deriving down the *Hebrew* Religion from the Beginning; The Call of *Abraham*, and God's familiar Converſe with him; The miraculous Deliverance of their Anceſtors out of *Egypt*, and Settlement in the Land of Promiſe; The Law received by *Moſes* from God's own Mouth; The Defeat of the Idolatrous Nations; The Erection and Defence of the *Jewiſh* Monarchy; The Miracles and Predictions of the Prophets, and infinite other Evidences, that the God of the *Jews* is the only true God. But ſince all

theſe things, peculiar to the *Jews*, could have no more Credit with an Infidel, than thoſe Scriptures have in which they are recorded; the firſt and great Work muſt be to demonſtrate the Truth of the Scriptures. When this Foundation is once well laid, the Controverſy is at an End; for the Scriptures are only an Account of the Doings of that One God, profeſſed by the *Jews*, whoſe Exiſtence makes the Point in Queſtion. I ſhall therefore obſerve what the *Jew* hath to ſay in Vindication of his Scriptures and their Authority, which may not only be a good Prevention againſt Infidelity and total Defection from God, and ſtrengthen the *Jewiſh* Cauſe heretofore; but is in all Ages a ſeaſonable Argument, and of great Comfort to every good Chriſtian: Becauſe the Foundation of our whole Faith ſtands upon the Baſis of the Old Teſtament.

* Joſeph. l. 1. *contra Appion.*

1. *Firſt* then, the * *Jew* urges the great Antiquity of theſe Writings; he ſhews you, that much the greateſt Part of the things recorded in the Bible were done before moſt of the Heathen Gods were extant; and thus, as Truth is before Falſhood, ſo God and the Scriptures were before Idols and their Fables. *Eſdras*, and *Haggai*, and *Zechariah*, and *Malachi*, the very laſt Writers in the *Hebrew* Canon, near † ſix hundred Years before Chriſt, and about the Beginning of the Second *(Perſian)* Monarchy, were before the moſt ancient *Greek* Hiſtorians, *Hellanicus*, *Herodotus*, &c. 'Tis true, ſome Poets, as *Orpheus*, *Homer*, &c. lived before; but the oldeſt of theſe reaches no higher than *Solomon*, and ſo five hundred Years ſhort of *Moſes*, the firſt Writer of the Bible; long after whom moſt of the Heathen Gods were yet unborn, as the *Gentiles* and their Genealogies confeſs. And as for *Abraham*, who lived five hundred Years before *Moſes*, he was before even thoſe, whom the *Pagans*, for reſpect to their Antiquity and Excellence, diſtinguiſhed by the Title of *Dii majorum Gentium*, as *Jupiter*, *Neptune*, *Pluto*:

† *An.* 570. Euſeb. *Chron.*

And

And yet even before that, the Scripture contains the Story of about two thousand Years. The *Pagans* then and their Gods are Fables of a fresh Date, in comparison of the venerable Antiquity of *Hebrew* Scripture; whose Authority must in reason overbear all other Laws, since extant before all others, in those first Times of Simplicity and Sincerity; and Part of them translated into divers Languages before the Monarchy of the *Persians*, that is, before any Heathen Histories were written. *See* Euseb. *Præp. Ev.* l. 9. c. 2, 3, 4.

2. The *Jew* desires in the next place, that the Manner of Writing, Authorising, and Preserving these Scriptures may be duly considered. For Writing, he says, nothing was ever set down here, but what was either taken immediately from God's own Mouth, as the Books of the Law and the Prophets were; or else, Collected from Time to Time by general Consent, as Matters fell out; which is the Case of their Historical Part of the Bible in *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and some other Books. That this Collection was not made by any single private Man, upon Hearsay, after his own Fancy, or at a Distance from the Events related, (as Heathen Histories are) but by general Agreement, at the very Time while things were fresh, not only in Mens Memory, but even before the Eyes of the Parties concerned, which leaves no room for Fiction in the Case. Again, the Books written were not admitted into the Canon without great Deliberation, and evident Proof of their being true. For either the whole Congregation or Synagogue, who were to approve them, (and among whom commonly were several Prophets) knew the Actions related in those Historical Books to be true, in which all the common People were likewise fully satisfied; or else they saw them confirmed by Signs and Wonders, which was the Testimony God gave to the Truth of *Moses*, and the Prophets. So that the Caution used in Authorising these Scriptures was as great as could be desired. And for the Care

of preſerving the Books thus written and admitted, nothing was ever more nice. The Reverence of the *Jews* for their Scriptures was ſuch, as will not ſuffer us to ſuſpect any material Change or Corruption in them. For *Firſt*, Twelve Authentick Copies were taken, for each Tribe one; then a Copy tranſmitted afterwards to every Synagogue in each Tribe; all this done by Notaries and Scribes, before Examiners and Witneſſes: Copies were laid up by the whole Congregation in the Treaſury of the Temple, kept under ſeveral Locks and Keys, never to be touched but by Perſons particularly appointed, nor uſed but with ſingular Reverence. To add or diminiſh, to corrupt or alter, was preſent Death by their Law. And how is it poſſible then, that among ſuch Writings, either Falſhood ſhould creep in, or Truth, once receiv'd, be afterwards deprav'd? Nay, which makes it in reaſon ſtill more impoſſible, the *Jew* obſerves, that no other Nation under Heaven ever expreſſed an equal Eſteem for their Laws and Records: They would not offer to die for them, which the faithful *Jew* was ready to do for every Sentence of Holy Scripture. And hence, in all their Afflictions and publick Commotions, in all their Captivities and Deſolations, they were more zealous to preſerve theſe Writings than their own Lives, and have accordingly kept them uncorrupt more Ages together, than all the Nations in the World have done any other Monuments of Antiquity whatſoever.

3. A *Third* Argument for the Truth of Scripture, is the Character of the Perſons who wrote it: The Hiſtorical Part, I have ſaid, was ſet down, and atteſted by publick Authority. The Prophetick was endited by the Prophets themſelves, plain, honeſt Men, authoriſed by Miracles; and yet ſo ſcrupulous, as never to ſay any thing of their own Head, but conſtantly to introduce all with a *Thus ſaith the Lord.* As God's Word, and not Man's, they left their Predictions

dictions in the publick Treasury, there to be kept till the Event should prove them true. Their Lives were unblameable, their Deaths for the most part in Defence of the Truth; such was *Isaiah*'s, *Jeremiah*'s, and *Ezekiel*'s, and *Amos*'s, and *Micah*'s, in the Latter Times of that People. And if we consider their first great Prophet *Moses*, who was withal an Historian, a Lawgiver, a Governor; the First that put Their, or rather God's, Acts into Writing, the First that Formed them into a Common-wealth; this Man alone, the *Jew* thinks sufficient to induce our Belief of what he hath left in Writing. Epiph. *de vit. Proph.*

His Antiquity hath been spoken to already, and even the Heathens confess it; His Miracles are acknowledged by his greatest Enemies: And, whereas some of them Objected these to have been done by Magick, and not by the Power of God, this is a most senseless Pretence. For why could not *Pharaoh*'s Magicians, who were bred up to this Art, deliver themselves from his Plagues? Why did they cry out, *This is the Finger of God?* Was it ever known that Magick divided a Sea, called up Quails sufficient to feed Six Hundred Thousand Men, besides Women and Children; drew Water out of a Rock; nourished a vast Army for forty years together with a Dew from Heaven; caused the Ground to open, and swallow up the Tents and Families of Rebellious Princes; brought Fire from Heaven, and consumed Two Hundred and fifty Persons, without the least Hurt to any that stood about them? Yet these Things did *Moses* in the sight of several Hundred Thousand Men, in the sight of his Enviers and Enemies; and if any one particular of these Miracles had been liable to Exception, would he have dared to commit them to Writing? Would the People have stood by him, or received those Writings for Divine? 'Tis plain then, he dealt fairly in this matter, and related only such things as every man present

Euſ. *Præp. Evang. l.* 9, 10. Joſeph. *cont. Ap.* C. 1. *Ant.* L. 2.

Exod. xiv. 16. Num. xi. 16.

ſent knew to be true. He wrote as he was commanded, and what God and his own Conſcience bore Teſtimony to; He cauſed the whole to be read to the People; he laid it up in the Ark, as God's Covenant with that Nation; he cauſed them all to Vow Obedience to it; He exhorted them to perſevere in the Service of that God, a little before his Death; He publiſhed his own Infirmities, and the Cauſe why he was not ſuffered to enter the Promiſed Land; He concealed not the Offences of his Brother *Aaron*, his Grandfather *Levi*, or his Siſter *Miriam*, (as Worldly Princes uſe to do in tenderneſs to their own and their Relations Honour;) He did not labour that any of his own Family ſhould ſucceed him in the Government; but left that to *Joſhua*, a Stranger of another Tribe, as God had appointed him. This ſhews him to have been no Man of an ambitious or worldly Spirit, but a true Servant of God; That he acted not by Magick or Deceit, but by the Power and Commiſſion of his great Maſter; That his Writings were true, and had all the Authority he aſſerted them to have, that is, That they were the undoubted Dictates of Almighty God.

4. All this is yet more ſtrengthened by the Univerſal Conſent of all thoſe, who wrote after *Moſes*. Prophane Writers uſually correct and reprove ſome that went before; but now, as a certain Mark, that theſe ſacred Authors were all guided by the ſame Spirit, no One of them for ſo many Ages hath ever oppoſed, but all approve and build upon the former. The Writings of *Joſhua* confirm thoſe of *Moſes*; the Book of *Judges* that of *Joſhua*: Thoſe of *Kings* and *Chronicles* refer you to the more Ancient Records: One Prophet builds upon another, and Chriſt approves them all, by that known Diviſion of *Law*, *Pſalms*, and *Prophets*, then in Uſe among the *Jews*. And theſe are the four External Proofs of the Old Teſtament's Authority; Their great and Venerable Antiquity; The Care and Caution uſed

Luke xxiv.

in

in Writing, Receiving, and Preſerving theſe Books; The Sincerity of the Authors; And their Uniform Agreement in one Spirit.

But there are beſides theſe ſome Internal Conſiderations, reſulting from the Matter and Circumſtances of theſe Books, ſome Characters of God's own Hand, Spirit, and Providence, as legible in theſe Letters, as his Exiſtence was ſaid before to be in his Creatures. Nay, much more viſible, in regard that theſe Writings were contrived to enlighten thoſe blind Eyes, who could not read him in the Volume of his Works.

Firſt then, obſerve the Subject they treat of, and the End they aim at. The *Former* conſiſts of the Doings of the One Eternal God; the *Latter* is the Glory of that God, and the Salvation of Mankind. And what Writings beſides have ſo Noble an Argument, or ſo ſublime an End? What Philoſopher ever pretended to theſe things? What Hiſtorian attributes Battles and Victories to God only? Others extol the Courage of their Soldiers, the Conduct and Vigilance of their Generals; they tell you of Fields won by Convenient Poſts, by favourable Weather, by flights of Birds, by Omens and other ſuperſtitious Fopperies; but theſe only ſay at every turn, *God delivered them into the Enemies Hand, God diſcomfited and gave the Victory.* Which of the celebrated Heathen Legiſlators, ever left ſuch Laws, as, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul; and thy Neighbour as thy ſelf?* Which of their Soothſayers had the Confidence to uſher in his Predictions with *The Lord hath ſpoken it?* Which of their Poets, thoſe Kindlers of Senſuality and Luſt, ever broke out into thoſe Raptures of Spiritual and Holy Love; *I will Love thee, O Lord my Strength*; and *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire in Compariſon of thee. Like as the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, ſo longeth my Soul after thee, O God!* Pſal. xviii. 42, 73.

O God! My Fleſh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Joy of my Life, my Strength and Portion for ever. Prophane Writers treat of Men, ſeek the Favour of Men, accommodate themſelves to their Paſſions and Infirmities, are ſubject to their Errors and Vanities; But the Scriptures treat of things above Fleſh and Blood, refer all to God and Ends above Nature. And yet the *Jews*, who wrote theſe, were as meer Men as the *Gentiles*. Whence then proceeds this mighty Difference, if not from hence, that the Heathen Writings proceeded from a Spirit entirely Human, but the *Jewiſh* from the ſpecial Dictates and Directions of a Spirit truly Divine, which enlightned that Nation above any other People in the World.

6. Let us, in the next place, obſerve the Style and Phraſe of the Holy Scriptures, ſo different from that of Common Writers, ſo inimitable by Man, ſo expreſſive of the God that inſpired it. No Labour for Ornament and Pomp; no Nicety in Words, but a marvellous Simplicity, ſuited to the Capacities of the Weak, and yet at the ſame time, ſuch a Depth as may exerciſe the Wits of the moſt Learned. What can be plainer, than the Account of the Creation, to inſtruct the meaneſt Reader how the World began? And when all the Circumſtances are juſtly weighed, what Aſtoniſhing and Unſearchable Myſteries does the wiſeſt Man diſcover in it? With this Simplicity there does alſo go along a conſtant Gravity and becoming Majeſty of Expreſſion: The Laws are delivered in ſhort, plain, peremptory Words, without any reſpect of Perſons, *Do this and thou ſhalt live*; *The Soul that Sinneth, it ſhall die.* But though the Scriptures diſdain thoſe little Artifices, which Human Writers ſo much affect, yet where it undertakes to perſuade, inſtruct and move Mens Paſſions, no Writings in the World had ever like effect with theſe. I could produce Infinite Inſtances, but for Brevity's ſake, let any one Read the

the firſt Chapter of *Iſaiah*, and compare it with any, the moſt laboured Orations of *Tully* or *Demoſthenes*; let him read the Hymns and Pſalms in the Bible, and ſet againſt them the moſt Pathetical Poems ever compoſed by the Wit of Man, and tell me then, whether there be any compariſon in the ſtirring and firing his Affections.

7. Another thing, which may contribute greatly to ſhewing the worth of this Book, is the Conſideration of ſome particular Matters contained in it. I ſhall mention Two. *Firſt*, Thoſe lofty and myſterious Doctrines above the Reach of Human Reaſon; as, *That* this whole World ſhould be made of nothing; *That* Angels ſhould be damned eternally for their Sins; *That Adam* ſhould tranſmit the Guilt of his Diſobedience to all his Poſterity; *That* the Seed of the Woman ſhould deliver us from that Guilt; *That* God is One Subſtance and Three Perſons; *That* the Second of theſe Perſons, being God, ſhould yet be made Man, and die upon a Croſs for Mankind; and that he ſhould make a way to Honour and Happineſs through Sufferings and Contempt. Theſe and many other Doctrines in the Bible, are ſo diſtant from Man's Reaſoning, that it could never have entred into his Head to conceive or invent them, much leſs to require the Belief of them from others; and therefore God, who alone could reveal theſe Secrets, muſt needs have been the Author of thoſe Scriptures, which diſcover them to us.

The *Second* thing I would inſtance in is the Prophecies of things to come. To this Evidence of their Divine Power God challenges the Heathen Idols: *Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods*; ſo allowing this for a good Teſtimony of their being ſo, if they could have given it. Not but that indeed the Oracles and Soothſayers did ſometimes hit upon the right in their Predictions of ſome future Events: But then Iſa. xli. 23.

this

this was done, either by Skill and Foreſight in the Stars and Elements, or by the Aſſiſtance of Wicked Spirits: And in Things either natural or not contingent, and then they might be foreſeen in their Cauſes; or elſe in ſuch as were properly accidental, and then theſe Predictions were mere Conjectures, and frequently detected of Uncertainty and Falſhood. This *Porphyry*, the great Patron of Paganiſm, freely confeſſes: And another Heathen of great Repute owns, that theſe Matters were managed ſo ſubtily, that by the dark, and ambiguous, and general Terms of their Anſwers, the Oracle always left it ſelf an evaſion to ſave its Credit, though the Event proved quite contrary to what was underſtood to be the true Importance of the Words. So unable are either Men or Devils to prognoſticate things purely contingent. But now in Scripture we meet with almoſt Infinite Prophecies, delivered by plain unlearned Perſons, in particular and expreſs Terms, many Years, nay many Ages before, when there was no probable Appearance, that ſuch things ſhould ever come to paſs; and not any one of theſe hath failed in any one Circumſtance or Tittle ſo foretold. And becauſe this alone, though all other Arguments were ſet aſide, is a moſt invincible Proof, that theſe Scriptures are from God's own Infallible Spirit, who ſaw and ſignified ſo long before what Wonders his Almighty Power intended afterwards to accompliſh, I ſhall very briefly lay before the Reader ſome remarkable Examples of this kind.

Porph. *de reſpon.* & *Orac.* Oenomaus *de falſit. Oracul.*

Such was that Prophecy to *Abraham* of his Iſſue (when as yet he neither had, nor could in the Courſe of Nature expect any ſuch,) inheriting the Land of *Canaan*; and the yet more wonderful and unlikely Account of his Poſterity's deſcent into *Egypt*; Their Bondage there, and their Deliverance from thence, after Four Hundred Years: The punctual fulfilling whereof is not only declared in the Book of *Exodus*, but acknowledged by Heathens and Enemies to the *Jews*.

Gen. xii. Exod. xii. Porph. *cont. Chri.* 4. Appion. *cont. Jud. l.* 4.

Jews. And it is worth our Obſervation, that this Prophecy was ſo generally Known and Believed, from *Abraham*'s time down to *Moſes*, as to be the great Comfort and Support of that Family in their Bondage, and the main Argument uſed by *Moſes* to pacify them under all the Hardſhips of their forty Years Paſſage to the promiſed Land.

Such again was that of *the Scepter not departing from* Judah, *till* Shilo, *the Expectation of all Nations, ſhould come.* The laſt Clauſe whereof the ancient *Hebrews* unanimouſly expound of the *Meſſiah*, and this was fulfilled near Two Thouſand years after, at the coming of Chriſt: For then did *Herod* a Stranger put the Line of *Judah* out of the Government of *Jewry*; and ſhortly after did they ceaſe to be a People or Government at all. But for the firſt Clauſe, it is aſtoniſhing to reflect, how many improbable Circumſtances it was clogged with. For *Firſt*, when *Jacob* ſpoke that Prophecy, the *Iſraelites* were few and low, not like to depart out of *Ægypt*, or ever be a diſtinct People: And ſo not like to have any Scepter or Government among them at all. But if they ſhould, yet was there no proſpect of its fixing in the Poſterity of *Judah*, who had three Elder Brothers. And leaſt of all in *Moſes* his time, who, when he wrote this Prophecy, had the Government himſelf; and had by God's appointment declared his Succeſſor of the Tribe of *Ephraim*. (And this by the way makes greatly for the Truth of that Author, that he ſhould leave ſuch a Prophecy in Diminution of his own, and to the Prejudice of other Tribes, which they would certainly never have endured, had they not been convinced it really came from God, though at a time, which gave no proſpect of its Accompliſhment.) For the ſpace of Four hundred years from *Moſes* to *Samuel*, the ſame Improbabilities continued; At length a King was choſen, but of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, and he provided with a Numerous Iſſue to ſucceed him.

Gen. xlix. 10.

him. And who could then imagine this Prophecy near fulfilling? Yet God's word muſt ſtand; And therefore, when Men leaſt thought of any ſuch thing, a Poor Shepherd was choſen out of the Tribe of *Judah*, and the Government ſo ſettled in his Family, that though many of his Succeſſors offended God more heinouſly than *Saul* had done, though ten Tribes fell off at once, and returned to their Allegiance no more, but conſpired with the Common Enemies to overthrow that Kingdom; yet ſtand it did, for more than twelve hundred Years, till the time of *Herod*, under whom Chriſt was born. And we may Challenge any Family in the World, to ſhew the like Term of a Government continuing in it.

Euſeb. *Chron.*

Gen. xlviii xlix. Num. xxxiv. Deut. xxxiii. Joſh. xv. xvi. xvii. Deut. xxxi.

The like may be ſaid of *Jacob*'s foretelling the Greatneſs of *Ephraim* above *Manaſſeh*; Of the Deſcription given both by him and *Moſes*, of the particular Portion and Dwelling of each Tribe in *Canaan*, which yet was determined by caſting of Lots; Of the ſame *Moſes* foretelling how God ſhould, many Generations afterwards, forſake that People for their Sins, carry them into Captivity and Baniſhment, and finally give them up, and receive the Gentiles in their ſtead. And whence could theſe things be learnt but from God alone? Whence again, that Curſe upon him that ſhould attempt to rebuild *Jericho?* Whence the overthrowing of *Jeroboam*'s Altar in *Bethel*, by *Joſiah* Three hundred years after? Whence thoſe Predictions of *Iſaiah* concerning the Birth, the Life, the Sufferings of the *Meſſias*, ſo punctual, that it may rather ſeem a Relation of things paſt, than a Prophecy of them yet to come? Or thoſe other Paſſages of the ſame Prophet concerning the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by the King of *Babylon*, and the Deſtruction of *Babylon*, the Reſtauration of the *Jews*, and Rebuilding their City and Temple by *Cyrus?* I might heap numberleſs Inſtances from *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *David*, *Samuel*,

Joſh. vi. 1 Kin. xvi. 1 Kin. xiii. 2Kin xxiii Iſa. vii. ix. xlii liii. 2 Kin. xx. Iſa. xiii. & xliv, xlv.

nuel, and many others; the whole Scripture almoſt being a kind of Divine Body, influenced with this Prophetick Spirit: And almoſt every day (though we obſerve or underſtand it not) ſome Prophecy or other is fulfilled; and ſhall be to the World's End.

That theſe Writings are Authentick, beſides other Proofs, we may be ſatisfied from hence; that they were publiſhed and ſcattered into many Thouſand Hands before the *Babyloniſh* Captivity; then carry'd with the People, diſperſed over *Chaldæa* and other parts of the World; ſo that there can be no poſſible Suſpicion of Forgery or an After-game, ſince all the World had ſeen and read them, long before the Events either did, or were ſuppoſed in any poſſibility of coming to paſs. All which is yet more ſtrengthen'd by the Quality of moſt of thoſe Perſons, who delivered theſe Prophecies; not Men of Skill or Learning, like the Heathen Aſtrologers; nor of acute Parts and ſtrong Imaginations, (which *Averroes* fancies capable of arriving to a Spirit of Prophecy) nor Dieted to it by Rules, as ſome pretend *Apollonius Tyanæus* was; but generally poor, plain, ignorant Men; *David* a Shepherd; *Amos* a Herdſman; ſometimes Women, as *Miriam*, and *Deborah*, and *Hannah*, and *Elizabeth*, and *Anna* the Daughter of *Phanuel*, and the Bleſſed Virgin, and the Daughters of *Philip*, who could not poſſibly receive the Fore-knowledge of things otherwiſe than by the Inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt. And this plainly proves the Excellency of Holy Scripture, the Certainty of the things contained there, and the Divinity of its Author.

1 Sam. xvi. Amos i. Exod. xv. Judg. iv. 1 Sam. ii. Luke i. 2. Acts xxi.

Though the Arguments already mentioned be abundantly ſufficient to prove the Truth of Scripture, and conſequently a God; yet it is no inconſiderable Advantage, that theſe Things are confirmed by the Teſtimony of Heathens and Infidels themſelves. In whoſe Hiſtories are to be found Footſteps of all the moſt remarkable Tranſactions Recorded

here; disguised indeed with many odd Circumstances and Superstitions; but this is yet a stronger Evidence for Us, because intimating, that those Authors did not copy their Accounts from the Bible, but took them from a General and Ancient Tradition, spread and received throughout the World.

The Creation of the World, and Infusion of the Human Soul by God, was allowed by the general Consent of Philosophers: The Flood of *Noah*, the long Lives of the first Patriarchs, the Tower of *Babel*, and Confusion of Languages; the Affairs of *Abraham*, the Destruction of *Sodom*; the Memorable Acts of *Moses* and *Joshua*; the History of the *Judges*, and *Saul*, and *David*, and *Solomon*; the Building of the Temple; the Captivity in *Babylon*; the Siege of *Jerusalem* by *Senacherib*, and his Murther at his return, committed upon him by his own Children in the Temple; These and many other matters of Note, are so largely Evidenced by Pagan Writers, that *Josephus* declareth the Publick Monuments of the *Syrians*, *Chaldeans*, *Phœnicians*, and many Relations in the *Græcian* History, sufficient to testify the Truth, Authority, and Antiquity of Holy Scripture, though they had been destitute of any other Evidence.

Euseb. *Præp. Evang. l.* 9. Joseph. *Antiq. l.* 1. 8. 13.

SECT. IV.

HItherto we have seen what Variety of Evidence God hath given to the World concerning Himself. Upon which Subject I have been the larger, because it is the Ground of all I propose to say in this Book; the fundamental Principle of all that Happiness or Misery, which must be our Portion for ever. For if this Point be so certain, so plentifully attested, both by every Creature, and the Words and Writings of the Creator himself, that no Ignorance can excuse our not Acknowledging it, nor any Wickedness

Vickedneſs have the Face to deny it; then ſure it comes us ſeriouſly to conſider what this God requires from us; and the next Reflection to that of creating us will naturally be, what Duty and hanks we owe him for it. Thus ſhall we find him Merciful Judge, and a Bountiful Rewarder, whom have already found a Gracious Maker and Lord. nd this Thought is the more reaſonable and neceſy, becauſe it is by no means probable, that that iſe God, who hath appointed every other Creae ſuch Rules of acting, as may ſome way illuſtrate own Glory, ſhould leave Mankind alone, the rthieſt and moſt capable of ſerving it, without Obligation to contribute to it.

And yet this St. *Paul* charges, as a moſt com- Rom. i.
n and egregious Error in the Heathen Sages; t, *when they knew God, they were not careful to glo- him as God; but became vain in their Imagi- ions.* They turned their Knowledge to no true count, but applied all their Thoughts to the Vaies of this World, without any Regard to the Hor and Deference due to that excellent Being, of oſe Exiſtence they were fully ſatisfied. With red to theſe, and the Judicial Blindneſs God gave m up to, St. *Paul* gives the World this Warg, that *the Wrath of God is revealed from Hea- againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of n, who hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*; who w God, and notwithſtanding live as if they ownor knew him not. And if this were an Admoon and Reproof proper for Heathens, who had y that natural Knowledge of God, which Rea- could infer from the Contemplation of his Creas; what Reprehenſion do we deſerve, who e not only that Light of Nature, but his written rd and Law Revealed to the *Jews?* Nay, and des this too, have heard the Voice of his only upon Earth; and live under the Doctrine and ections of his Goſpel; and yet live (many of us)

as negligently, as far from Virtue, and a good Life as the erranteſt Heathen of them all.

Rom. i. Certainly if that be true, as moſt unqueſtionable it is, which the Apoſtle affirms there of the Heathen Philoſophers, that even the little Knowledge they had of God, rendered them altogether without Excuſe: Then by our Saviour's own Rule, that Luke xii. 48. *whom much is given, of him there ſhall be much required*, we can no way ſhift off the Inference arifing from hence againſt our Selves, *viz.* That our Account ſhall be vaſtly heavier, and we much more inexcuſable than the very *Gentiles*, if after all our clear Knowledge, and ſuch ample Manifeſtation of the Divine Nature and Juſtice, we grow vain in our Imaginations, as they did then, and the much greater Part of the World (it is to be feared) do this Day; If we, I mean, make to our ſelves Gods of the Things of this World, devote our Selves entirely to temporal and tranſitory Cares and Pleaſures; and laviſhly throw away upon theſe the Time and Pains and Application of Thought and Affections, which we ought to employ in the Service and to the Honour of this great and only Lord and Creator.

CHAP. III. SECT. I.

Of the End for which Man was created.

THE laſt Chapter is ſufficient to inform us Who is our Creator. And now the next Point, which regularly offers it ſelf to be conſidered, is to what Purpoſe God created us, and this World for Us, ſo as to make us Lords of all below. We have ſeen already, that as Nothing made itſelf, ſo Nothing was made for, or to ſerve itſelf alone. And therefore it concerns us to know

hom Man was made to ſerve. For the Reaſon
lds equally with regard to Him too, that ſince
an was not made by Himſelf, ſo neither is it like-
that he was made meerly for himſelf.

Now God's own Word hath aſſured us, that *He* Prov. xvi.
de all Things for Himſelf; and if all, then Man, 4.
no means the leaſt and moſt inconſiderable part
his Works, is no doubt included. They are
e vain and inconſiderate only, who look upon
emſelves to be free and at their own Diſpoſal,
d imagine they were ſent into the World pure-
for Pleaſure and Diverſion. The Sober and
ſcreet are ſuch as *Solomon* ſpeaks of, when he
s, *The way of Life is above to the Wiſe, that he* Prov. xv.
y depart from Hell beneath. They keep the End 24.
living conſtantly in View, and are perſuaded
at God ſhall one day bring them into Judgment.
ay, the Chriſtian is forewarned by his Saviour,
at *every idle Word* muſt be ſeverely Reckoned
r. And no Man, who converſes diligently, ei-
er with his own Reaſon, or the Holy Scriptures,
n remain ignorant or unmindful, that no provoca-
on charged there upon wicked Men is more hei-
uſly reſented, than that Security of Temper, which
ndly fancies that God regards not Mens Actions,
d never intends to take any Account of them. To
ch therefore as are deſirous to diſcharge this Ac-
unt faithfully I am at preſent addreſſing my ſelf.
nd to theſe I can give no better Advice, than to
ok upon themſelves as Perſons in Truſt, to ob-
rve ſeriouſly, why they were ſent hither, and
hat it is expected they ſhould perform. This
ill keep us from rambling after Impertinencies,
d make us diligent in examining our own Con-
iences, how our Time ought to be beſtowed,
hat is to be learnt, and what done by us. This
ill ſoon convince us, that the true Deſign of our
eing placed here is to ſerve God, and by that Ser-
ice to gain Heaven and Salvation. This was the

Deut. iv. Luke i. Condition of our Creation, that *We ſhall be to Him a People*; and this was the Intent of our Redemption, for therefore *are we delivered out of the Hands of our Spiritual Enemies, that we might walk before God in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all the Days of our Life.*

And this Conſideration rightly improved will have two very valuable Effects. *Firſt*, in a due Senſe, that ſerving God, and working out our Salvation, is our proper and only Buſineſs. We ſhall be convinced that every Thing which is contrary, or foreign, or not conducive to this End, can turn to no true Profit; that all the Time and Pains laid out upon it is Vanity, and loſt Labour; ſuch as muſt end at laſt in Shame, and Sorrow, and Repentance; becauſe this is no Article of that Reckoning we ſhall be called upon for, nor can it influence our future State, except ſo far as it may expoſe us to Puniſhment, for miſpending our Time and Thoughts upon it. And *Secondly*, ſince we have but one End to promote, and all other Creatures are only to ſerve our Occaſions in order to that End, this will help us to become indifferent to all theſe outward Things; and we ſhall deſire them, only in ſuch Proportions, as may be uſeful for the Attainment of our End. Riches or Poverty, Health or Sickneſs, Honour or Contempt, will be choſen or dreaded by us, in ſuch meaſure as theſe may more or leſs contribute to the Service of God and the Safety of our Souls. For whoſoever ſeeks, or covets, or loves, or uſes any of the Creatures farther than thus, he ſets up a new End to himſelf, and forſakes that which he was ſent into the World to purſue. And this may be a good Direction for any Man to judge the State of his Soul by. If he attend to his true Buſineſs; if his Cares and Thoughts, and Endeavours, and Diſcourſe, and the whole ſtrain of his Converſation tend this way; if the Degree of his Concern for the Conveniencies of Life, anſwer to that of their Uſefulneſs

fulneſs to his main Point; if his days be ſpent in the Study and Service of God, and his Labour be *to work out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling*: Phil. ii. 12
This Man is aſſuredly in a Bleſſed Condition, his Feet are in a Right Path, and he ſhall not fail at length to attain that Happineſs and Kingdom, which he ſo zealouſly aſpires after. But if, inſtead of attending to that great Concern, he turn aſide to Vanity, Promotion, or Pleaſure, or Wealth, or Fame, the Favour of Princes, the Advancement of his Family, or any thing of no Conſequence to his main Purpoſe of his Creation; if theſe Trifles employ his Time, his Thoughts, his Talk; if he Delight more in them than in *Seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*, then his Condition is exceeding Dangerous; and no method, but changing his Courſe entirely, can ſave him from utter Ruin. For it is not to be imagined, that any Perſon employed in a particular piece of Service, and doing no part of that which was given him in Charge, ſhall ever receive the Reward aſſigned and promiſed only to the due Diſcharge of that particular Service.

And this now gives us a plain reaſon of that general deſtruction of Souls, which moved our Saviour to inſinuate, how *Few* are ſaved, by calling the Way to Hell and Ruin wide and *Much* frequented; but that to Salvation narrow and ſtrait, and the Paſſengers in it very Rare: Which all comes to paſs, by that very little Account Men make of that which is their chief and only Buſineſs. For do but obſerve the Courſes they take, and what Deſigns they purſue, and then tell me, whether this Affair comes under their Management, or almoſt into their Thoughts. How many Thouſands do you find, who employ not one half-hour in four and twenty, not one day in a Hundred, in the Service of God, and the Concerns of their Soul? How Infinite are the Men that break their Reſt and rack their Brains

about the Gains and Conveniences of this World, and how few that make any manner of Proviſion for the next? How many find time enough to Eat, and Drink, and Sleep, and Dreſs, and Divert themſelves, but are always buſy or otherwiſe indiſpoſed when they ſhould attend their greateſt Buſineſs? How many Days, and Weeks, and Months, and Years, are conſumed in Sports and Paſtimes, without any regard of any thing that is wiſe, and ſerious, and of real Importance to Mankind? How many wretched Women ſpend more days in a year, in providing Ornaments for their Body, than they do Hours in their whole Life, in Praying or Reading, or any other Religious Exerciſe? And what can become of ſuch People in the End? What will they have to alledge in excuſe for this Negligence and Folly, when called to render an account of the Talents committed to their Charge? If a Steward, or a Factor, ſent abroad upon his Maſter's Expence, ſhould return at laſt with a long Bill, of ſo much Time and Money laid out, in Singing, Dancing, Drinking, Balls, Plays, Courtſhip, Hawking, Hunting, or Racing; but when he came to anſwer what time he had beſtowed upon his Maſter's Affairs, ſhould alledge, that he was ſo entirely taken up with thoſe other Entertainments, as to have no leiſure left for theſe: Who would not think ſuch a Wretch deſerved the ſevereſt Puniſhment, and all manner of Reproach? Think then, what Confuſion ſhall fall upon Them at the laſt dreadful day, who were ſent into the World to trade for ſo rich a Prize as the Kingdom of Heaven, and have ſquandered away all their Time, and Thoughts, upon the Trifles of this World, without any Care or Application for the other?

1 Cor. ix. St. *Paul* attributes the attainment of Mens incorruptible Crown, to their keeping the Goal conſtantly in view, making up directly to it, and running within thoſe ſtrait Lines, marked out by the Maſter

Maſter of the Race. But moſt of us run after Flies and Feathers, turn out of the way, and ſpend our ſtrength in the purſuit of Vanity, without any reflection upon our Folly, till it be too late to mend it. Obſerve how the Wiſe Man hath deſcribed the Lamentation of thoſe truly unfortunate Perſons in Hell, who heaped up Treaſures, raiſed their Families, lived ſumptuouſly, indulged their Eaſe and Pleaſure, and thought themſelves wiſe and happy while they lived. *We wearied our ſelves in the way of wickedneſs and deſtruction. But as for the way of the Lord we have not known it. What hath pride profited us? Or what good have our boaſted riches and pomp brought us? All thoſe things are paſs'd away like a ſhadow, and as a poſt that haſteth by; but we are conſumed in our own Iniquity.* Be not then deluded, my dear Chriſtian Brother, with the falſe Judgments of thoſe who magnify and applaud ſuch as are in greateſt danger. The Road to *Babylon* will never bring thee to *Jeruſalem*. And what a grief will it be to change thy meaſures, after long labour and toil in a wrong Courſe? If a Man had travell'd but one whole day, and ſhould be told at night, that all his pains were loſt, the loſs of a ſingle day's Journey would afflict him, though his Buſineſs were not extremely urgent, and the next day might fetch it up again. But, if his Buſineſs were great, if his Life lay upon being at his Journey's end by ſuch an hour preciſely, if the Loſs were irrecoverable, and he ſo ſpent, that he could go no farther, what a ſad perplexity would this be, to find he had run amiſs, and was quite out of his way? Now this will be the caſe when the night of Death comes, with all who ſpent their Days in vain Projects, and neglected God and their own Souls. They ſhall find themſelves out of the way at the End of their Journey; they have drudged through deep and craggy ways to no purpoſe; they have loſt their time, their labour, and all opportunity to retrieve either; their ſtrength

Wiſd. v. 7, 8, 9, 13.

is

is waſted and gone, their Danger unavoidable, their Puniſhment inſupportable, and their Grief and Calamity inconſolable.

Oh! could we but form to ourſelves a juſt *Idea* of thoſe inward Terrors, which take hold of the greateſt Monarchs at their laſt hour, after all their Proſperity and Luxury; could we diſcern the Thoughts of *Alexander* dying with Poyſon, or *Julius Cæſar* aſſaulted in the Senate-Houſe, or *Herod* ſmitten with a noyſome and incurable Diſeaſe, or that other *Herod* ſtruck with an Angel and eaten up with Worms, or thoſe many other victorious Princes, who when they come to end a wicked and worldly Life, have quite other notions of things than the height of their Jollity and Succeſs had ever given them before; Theſe gripes and ſtings would be ſo many warnings to us, to provide for our great account, and enter betimes into thoſe Thoughts and that Judgment of things, which a Death-bed and a nearer proſpect of God's dreadful Tribunal, will (when too late perhaps) moſt certainly awaken in us. Remember then, that what theſe Men are now, thou thy ſelf ſhalt ſhortly be, and that no folly is comparable to that of not profiting by the Examples and Miſcarriages of others. All Men will one day agree in a right ſenſe of things. Here only is the difference; that Wiſe Men have it in time, and Fools when it is too late to do them good. Hadſt thou that ſenſe now, thou wouldſt borrow even from thy meat, and ſleep, and moſt neceſſary avocations and refreſhments, to lay out upon the one thing yet more neceſſary. The opportunities of reforming are an infinite bleſſing, and theſe are yet in thy hand. *The living Dog*, in this reſpect, *is better than the dead Lion*; for while Life laſts, matters may ſtill be amended. But this day wears away apace, and the dreadful night of Death will overtake thee quickly, and then there ſhall be no more ſpace for Reformation. *Oh that Men were*

wiſe,

wiſe, that they would underſtand this, that they would conſider their latter End; for he is the only Wiſe Man, who is wiſe for his own Soul. Deut. xxxii.

The main point in moral Actions, is to regard the End; and how comes it to paſs, that this moſt neceſſary Circumſtance is wanting in our Spiritual Concerns? If Heaven be our End, what do we mean to be ſo fond of Earth? If God be our End, why do we ſo greedily ſeek the favour of Men? If the Salvation of an immortal Soul be our End, why do we ſo eagerly purſue temporal Vanities? *Why do we ſpend our Money for that which is not Bread, and our Labour for that which ſatisfieth not?* Iſai. lv. If we be Heirs of a Kingdom, why do we enſlave our ſelves to the Creatures? If it be our Birthright to eat at our Father's table, why do we delight to feed on huſks with Swine? Alas! we may complain with the Wiſe-man, *The bewitching of naughtineſs doth obſcure the things that are honeſt, and the wanderings of Concupiſcence undermine the ſimple mind.* Luke xv. Wiſd. iv. 12. But will the fatal power of this Enchantment excuſe us? By no means. *This people is not wiſe, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will ſhew them no favour.* Iſai. xxvii. 11. This is a folly of Mens own creating, and they who are ſeduced by it, ſhall not only loſe their labour, but be puniſhed for their loſs.

Think then betimes, what thou wilt do or ſay, when thy Lord calls in his Talents, and expects an Improvement, when thou ſhalt hear that dreadful word, *Give an account of thy Stewardſhip, for thou mayeſt be no longer Steward*; Luke xvi. when *God ſhall come in a day when thou thinkeſt not, and at an hour when thou lookeſt not for him, and ſhall cut the unfaithful ſervant aſunder, and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers, where ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* Mat. xxiv. Mat. xxv. Examine therefore thy ſelf preſently, and ſtate the Account with thy own Conſcience. If thou haſt trifled and wandered hitherto, repent, and

and return, and redeem the time thou haſt already loſt. If thou haſt not yet conſidered the weight of this Affair, do it immediately; and remember, that ſpeedineſs in a good Reſolution is the beſt Huſbandry, the moſt profitable management, and that the gaining of Crowns and Kingdoms is not a Wiſdom to be compared unto it. I will therefore conclude this Chapter, as the Preacher does his Book; *Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole of Man*, i. e. In this does every Man conſiſt. His Beginning, his End, his Life. The reaſon why he is a Man, is, that he may act and live in obedience to him who made him ſo; and he who does not this, is in effect no Man; For he loſeth all the Benefit of his Creation, his Redemption, his Name, and his Nature.

Eccleſ. xii. 13.

CHAP. IV. SECT. I.

Religion that Service of God, which is the End of Man. Of the Chriſtian Religion in particular.

AFter ſuch Proof, that Man was created by God, and in reſpect of This, and ſundry other Benefits, is bound to honour and ſerve him, 'tis fit we now enquire, wherein the Service required by God conſiſts. Now all this is uſually comprehended under the general Term of Religion; as Piety contains the Duty of Children to Parents, and Obedience that of Servants to their Maſters. The Rights of both which Relations God expreſly aſſerts to himſelf, by one of the Prophets; *The Son honoureth his Father, and the Servant his Maſter. If I then be a Father, where is my Honour; and if I be a Maſter, where is my Fear?* The Acts of Religion are many, and of different kinds. Some internal, as Love

Malach. i.

Love and Faith, and Devotion and Prayer; ſome External, as Worſhip, and Sacrifice, and Vows, and ſuch other things as ſerve only to teſtify and declare the Internal. Sometimes again Religion is meant of all manner of Virtues and charitable Offices, though they have not immediate Relation to God; and thus St. *James* tells us, *Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to viſit the Widows and Fatherleſs in their Affliction, and to keep one's ſelf unſpotted from the World.* In ſhort, Heathens and Infidels have ever agreed in their Notions of this Word, and every Sect and Opinion, who have profeſſed Reverence and Honour to a Divine Being, did always call that Profeſſion of theirs by the name of Religion. But that Religion which now I am about to treat of in particular is the Chriſtian: That ſubſtance, and form, and way of ſerving God, revealed to us by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, as the only proper and effectual Method of now anſwering our Duty, and the End of our Creation; for ſo St. *Peter* hath inſtructed us. *There is no other Name under Heaven given among Men whereby we muſt be ſaved, but only the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

James i. 27.

Acts iv. 12.

I ſhall not here run out into nice Diſquiſitions, concerning the State of thoſe, who lived and dyed for two thouſand years together, before our Saviour's Appearance in the World. It is ſufficient, that the Fathers, and thoſe under *Moſes*'s Law, believed in a Redeemer to come, as we do in him already come: And, that this Faith was required to be more or leſs explicit, in proportion as the Diſcoveries concerning him were more or leſs plain and expreſs. They had Ceremonies and Sacraments prefiguring his coming, as we have Sacraments repreſenting that coming already paſt. He was then the *Expectation of all Nations.* Their Faith in ſubſtance was the ſame with ours; His Merits the ſame efficient Cauſe of Salvation, though the Circumſtances of that Belief, and the manner of applying

thoſe Merits, were different then from what now they are. How God will deal with ſuch as had not equal advantage in point of Revelation, we muſt leave it to his Juſtice and Mercy to determine. But my buſineſs is at preſent with the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, under which We live at this day. And, in eſtabliſhing the Truth of this, I ſhall keep to my former method in the proof of a God. To prove it is requiſite, both for the Comfort and confirming of thoſe, who already believe, againſt ſeducements and temptations; And likewiſe for awakening the careleſs, and ſenſual, who alas! in too great numbers, ſeem loſt to all ſenſe of this Belief, and unmindful of the grounds upon which it ſhould be entertained. But in the Proof it ſelf, I ſhall inſiſt (as formerly) upon the Teſtimony of ſuch Perſons as could not be partial, the Confeſſions of our Enemies, or elſe the Records of thoſe, who, living before Chriſtianity came in queſtion, muſt needs be indifferent in the Cauſe.

Heb. xi. i. The Apoſtle obſerves very truly, *That Faith is the Evidence of things not ſeen*, ſuch as Reaſon, and Arguments, meerly human, could never have made clear to us. It is the Aſſent to things propounded by God, and muſt be voluntary to make it an act of Obedience. But yet we are here to proceed upon rational meaſures; and therefore we are not left deſtitute of Teſtimony ſufficient, both inward and outward, to induce our Belief: *God hath not left himſelf without Witneſs.* He teſtifies to the Truth of what we believe, by that inward Light and Conviction, the Peace and Joy, and Conſolation in believing. He teſtifies to it outwardly, by thoſe probable Arguments and *Motives of Credibiliy*, (as the Schools ſpeak) which engage the Aſſent of impartial and conſidering Men. So that, although the Object of Faith do not come to us with the Evidence of Senſe of Demonſtration, ſo to leave room for the Freedom of our Will, and the Obe-

Acts xiv. 17.

dience

dience of our embracing it; yet there are ſo many Circumſtances of Probability, as give us the higheſt degree of Moral Aſſurance; and ſuch as every reaſonable Man muſt confeſs it againſt all Reaſon to miſtruſt or hold out againſt.

This is what I ſhall endeavour to make appear, I hope, to the Reader's full ſatisfaction. And One great point gained toward it already, is the Certainty and Divine Authority of the Old Teſtament. The Scriptures, which we have received from the profeſt Enemies of our Faith, which were written many Ages before the Name of Chriſtianity was known in the World. And therefore, whatever I ſhall alledge out of thoſe Records, cannot but be of ſingular Credit and Importance to my preſent purpoſe. And that is, to ſhew, that Jeſus Chriſt was the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, promiſed and expected from the beginning of the World; that he was the Son of God, and himſelf very God; and conſequently, that the Doctrine and Religion he hath left us is true, and the only ordinary way of Salvation now upon Earth. For the clearer manifeſtation whereof, I ſhall branch out my Diſcourſe into Three Heads ſuitable to the order of three diſtinct Times, in which the matters to be mentioned fell out. The *Firſt* ſhall contain ſuch as happened before our Lord's Incarnation; the *Second*, things done between his Birth and Aſcenſion; the *Laſt*, ſuch as happened after his departure from Earth and return to *Heaven*.

SECT. II.

How Chriſt was foretold before his Coming.

THE Proofs of Chriſtianity, before our Saviour's appearance in the fleſh, may be diſtinguiſhed, as they were made to *Jews* or *Gentiles*. For Chriſt being

being appointed from the beginning, indeed before the foundation of the World, to work out the Redemption of *Jew* and *Gentile* both, he was for that reaſon foretold to both, and each of them had encouragement and warning to expect, and depend upon his appearance.

For the *Jews*, no Man can deny that the Promiſes of a *Meſſias* run throughout the whole Body of their Scriptures. By which is meant, a Perſon Anointed, and ſent by God to be a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Reconciler, a Mediator between God and Man, a Satisfier for the Sins of the World, a Reſtorer of the Innocence loſt in *Paradiſe*; a Maſter, Teacher, and Lawgiver; and finally, a Spiritual King to reign in the Hearts of Men, to ſubdue the Power and Tyranny of that common Enemy, who vanquiſhed our firſt Parents, and makes aſſaults upon us daily.

Of this we have Evidence, as ancient as that of *Adam's* offence in *Paradiſe*. For no ſooner had he broken that firſt Covenant by eating the forbidden fruit, and ſo rendering himſelf and all Mankind in Him, obnoxious to the Wrath of God, and the Power of the Devil; but a promiſe of Redemption is given to ſuſtain him in theſe words, *The Seed of the Woman ſhall break the Serpent's Head.* Which imported, that One in time ſhou'd be born of a Woman, who ſhould conquer and trample under foot the kingdom of Sin and Satan. And thus, not only the eldeſt *Jews* and *Rabbins* underſtand this place, of a ſpiritual Conqueſt and Dominion; but the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe applies it to the Tempter in theſe words: *They have a certain and preſent remedy againſt thee, O Devil; for the time ſhall come, when they ſhall tread thee down by the help of Meſſias their King.*

Gen. iii.

Maim. *Targ. Hieroſ.*

The ſame Promiſe is repeated afterwards to *Abraham*, about two thouſand years after; and again to his Son *Iſaac*, *In thy ſeed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth*

Gen. xii. 22.

Earth be blessed. Which had been but a small Blessing to *Abraham* and those other *Jews*, who never saw this *Messias* in the flesh, had he been design'd for a temporal King only. And much less still to the *Gentiles*, had this *Messias* been such a King of the *Jews*, as was to destroy and subdue all others to the obedience of this People only, according to the fond imaginations of the later *Rabbins*.

The Patriarch *Jacob* is yet more express, *The Sceptre shall not depart from* Judah *till* Shiloh, *the Expectation of the Nations, come.* Which last Words the *Chaldee* Paraphrast and *Onkelos*, both of great Authority with the *Jews*, interpret thus; Until *Christ*, or the *Messias* comes; who is the hope and expectation of all Nations, as well of *Gentiles*, as of us that are *Jews*. From which Scripture thus expounded Two considerable Inferences may be drawn against the later and modern *Jews*. *First*, That, if their *Messias* was to be the hope and blessing of *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, then can he not be a Temporal King to destroy the *Gentiles*; but a Spiritual King to reign over them, and subdue the Enemies of their Souls. And *Secondly*, if the Temporal Kingdom of *Judah* must, as in Fact it did cease, at the coming of the *Messias*, then it is a very vain conceit, to expect such a *Messiah*, as should establish and render that temporal Kingdom everlasting. Gen. xlix.

During the Bondage of that People in *Egypt*, we find but little upon record concerning them; but about four hundred years after the promise to *Abraham*, God gave them by *Moses* another clear Revelation of the *Messias*, in these words; *I will raise up to this People a Prophet from among their brethren like unto Thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.* Now that this cannot be understood of any other Prophet a- Deut. xviii. 18, 19. Acts iii. 18, 23.

Deut. xxxiv. 10. mong the *Jews* but Christ only, is plain by that other passage, *And there arose not any other Prophet in Israel like unto Moses.*

About four hundred years after *Moses* arose *David:* A holy person, and the first King of the house of *Judah*, to whom the particulars of this mystery were yet abundantly more revealed. As first, that Christ should be born of his stock and lineage; *I* Psal. xxxix. 35, 36. *have sworn unto* David *by my Holiness, His seed shall endure for ever, and his Throne as the Sun before me.* Which words, though applied by the later *Jews* to *Solomon*, (as indeed they may be in some sense, so far forth as he was a Type of Christ,) yet cannot they be literally and properly true of Him, whose Earthly Throne was rent in pieces quickly after his death by *Jeroboam*, and after that, utterly overthrown. They must therefore of necessity be understood of an Eternal King to be born of *David's* Seed; as must also those other Passages, *Thou art* Psal. ii. 7, 8. *my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I will give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the utmost parts of the Earth for thy Possession.* Which were never fulfilled in *Solomon*, nor any temporal King in *Jewry* after him. And much less were these that Psal. lxxii. 5, 7, 8, 11, 17. follow; *They shall fear thee as long as the Sun and Moon endure, throughout all generations. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of Peace, so long as the Moon endureth. He shall have Dominion also from Sea to Sea, and from the River unto the ends of the Earth. All Kings shall fall down before him, all Nations shall do him service. All Posterities shall be blessed through him, and all the Heathen shall praise him.* These words of Christ's Kingdom enduring to the world's end, of his universal dominion, his adoration by all Nations, his making all the posterities and families of the Earth blessed, cannot be applied to any King, that ever was or shall be, among the *Jews*, but to Christ only.

This Promise of Christ to come of *David's* Seed is

repeated and confirmed by many Prophecies, par-
ularly that of *Jeremy*; *Behold the days come, ſaith* Jerem.
Lord, that I will raiſe unto David *a righteous* xxiii. 5, 6.
anch, and a King ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall
ecute judgment and juſtice in the Earth; *In his days*
dah *ſhall be ſaved, and* Iſrael *ſhall dwell ſafely*; *and*
s is his name whereby he ſhall be called, The Lord
r Righteouſneſs. Now it is obſervable that this
d is promiſed here to *David*, as a bleſſing ſtill to
me; four hundred years after *David* was dead;
d conſequently this could not be meant of *Solo-*
n, or any temporal King of that Line; but of
riſt only, who was called in a peculiar manner,
e ſeed and Son of David; becauſe *David* was the
t King of the Tribe of *Judah*, and not only his
nceſtor after the fleſh, but in many things a ſpe-
l Type and Figure of him. Upon the account
which reſemblance it is, that *Ezekiel* calls the
eſſias by the Name of *David* himſelf; *I will ſave* Ezek.
flock, and I will ſet up one Shepherd over them, xxxiv. 22,
d he ſhall feed them, even my Servant David, *he* 23, 24, 25.
ll feed them, and he ſhall be their Shepherd. And
he Lord will be their God, and my ſervant David
Prince among them: And I will make with them
Covenant of Peace. The *Jews* themſelves confeſs Thalmud.
e Meſſias here meant by *David*, ſo called as a de- Tract.
ndant from him. And ſo in reaſon it muſt be; Sanh.
r *David* who had been then four hundred years Cohel.
ad, could not come again to feed God's People,
d govern them in his own Perſon.

Iſaiah, who lived about a hundred years before
eremy and *Ezekiel*, was wonderfully enlightened
ncerning the Meſſiah, and the State of Affairs un-
r him, which he deſcribes after this manner. *In* Iſai. ii 2,
e laſt days the mountain of the Lord's houſe ſhall be 3, 4.
abliſhed in the top of the mountains, and ſhall be ex-
ted above the hills; *and all Nations ſhall flow unto*
And many People ſhall go and ſay, Come ye and
us go up to the mountain of the Lord; *and he will*

teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his Paths.
Mic. iv. *And he ſhall judge among the Nations.* The ſame is repeated by *Micah*, and applied alſo there to the *Meſſias*; and can have no other meaning, by the confeſſion of the very *Jews* themſelves. The ſame is
Iſai. iv. 2. foretold by *Iſaiah* in ſundry other *Chapters*, where ſpeaking of the *Meſſiah*, he ſays, *In that day ſhall the Branch of the Lord be glorious, and the fruit of the Earth ſhall be excellent and comely.* The *Branch of the Lord*, becauſe the *Meſſias* ſhould be *God*; *the fruit*
Iſai. ix. 6. *of the Earth*, becauſe he ſhould be *Man*. And in the *ninth* Chapter he ſtyles Him, *Wonderful, Counſellor, the Mighty God, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of*
Iſai. xi. 1, to 11. *Peace*. In the *Eleventh* he calls him, the *Rod out of the Stem of* Jeſſe, *and the Branch growing out of his Roots*; and gives a large deſcription of the excellent Spirit which ſhould reſt upon Him. and the many wonderful happy effects of his Government. Of the
Ch. xxv. 8. xxxv. 5. Perſon again he declares, that *He ſhould ſwallow up Death in victory*; that *He ſhould open the Eyes of the blind, and unſtop the Ears of the deaf*; that *He ſhould not cry, nor lift up, nor cauſe his voice to be heard in*
Ch. xlii. 2, 3, 4. *the ſtreets*; that *He ſhould not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking flax*; that *He ſhould bring forth judgment unto truth*, and *not fail, nor be diſcouraged*. And, for the extent of his Commiſſion, he introduces
Ch. xlix. 6. Luke ii. 31, 32. Acts xiii. 47. God the Father ſpeaking thus: *It is a light thing that thou ſhouldſt be my ſervant to raiſe up the tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of* Iſrael; *I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my Salvation unto the end of the Earth.* The Prophecies of this kind are infinite: but that of *Daniel* is
Dan. ix. 24, 25, 26. moſt expreſs concerning the time of the *Meſſiah's* coming and death: And here indeed is the common Point, in which the Signs and Figures, the Parables and Prophecies of the Old Teſtament center; and which conſpire from time to time in ſignifying to the *Jews*, that *Chriſt* ſhould come, that his Kingdom ſhould be ſpiritual, and that it ſhould never have an end.

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I pass now to consider, *Secondly*, the Quality of *Christ*'s Person, which is a point of equal Importance with the former, and that wherein the later *Jews* dissent from us; which is, that the Prophecies alledged before do prove, that the *Christ* must be *God*, and the Son of *God*, taking upon Him our Nature, that is, both *God* and *Man*. For so in *Genesis*, *The seed of the Woman* declares Him to be *Man*; and *Breaking the Serpent's head*, implies Him to be *God*; since no finite or created Power is sufficient for such a Conquest. By the *Branch of the Lord*, I said, His Godhead, and by the *Fruit of the Earth* His Manhood, is signified. Whose *Kingdom everlasting as the Sun and Moon?* Who is He, *whose Generation none can declare?* Whom *all the Angels of God are commanded to worship*; who is *seated at the right hand of God?* To whom do these, and many other such Excellencies and Privileges belong, but to *God* only? The last of these Instances our Saviour is said to have posed the *Pharisees* with, by asking, If *Christ was* David's *Son*, *how* David *in Spirit could call him Lord?* signifying hereby that the *Messias*, who, according to his Human Nature, was to be *David*'s Son; yet with regard to his Divine Nature, the same was *David*'s Lord. And so *Jonathan*, and the publick Commentaries of the *Hebrews* interpret that Psalm. The Prophet *Micah* express, that the *Ruler to be born in* Bethlehem which the *Jews* unanimously agreed to be *Christ*, is one, *whose goings out are from everlasting*. And such no mere Man ever was, or can be: *Esay* declares the Child born to be *God*, *the everlasting Father*, *the Prince of Peace*. *David* calls him *God*, by the same Word, which in the same Text is applied to *God* the Father: Even *Jehovah*, acknowledged by the *Jews* to be the incommunicable Name of the One only true *God*, is given to him by *Jeremy*, as the ancient *Hebrews* confess; One of whom says, "In this place *Jehovah* signifies nothing else but the *Messias*."

Psal. lxxxix. Isai. liii. Psal. xcvii. Matt. xxii.

Jonath. *Collect. & Mid. Tehillim in Psal.* ii. 7. Mic. v. 2. Isai. ix. 6. Psal. xlv. 6, 7. Jer. xxiii. 6. R. Abba. *Comm. in Lament. Midr. Tehill. in Psal.* xx. Mos. Hadarsan. *in Gen.* xli.

So expounding *Zephan.* iii. 9. And many othe Teſtimonies of *Rabbies* and *Cabaliſts* might be pro duced to the ſame purpoſe.

It is farther obſervable, That the antient *Jews* and ſome of the later too, do hold and prove fro Scripture, that the *Chriſt* ſhall be the *Son*, or *Word* Kimchi *in Radic.* *God* incarnate. *Rab. Kimchi* hath a long Diſcour to ſhew, that the *Shiloh* in *Jacob*'s Prophecy is t Tharg. *in Iſai.* Son of *God*. The Perſon, call'd by *Iſaiah* the *Lor Branch*, is by the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe ſtyl'd t Pſal. xxxix. 26, 27. *Meſſias of Jehovah*. Thoſe Paſſages in the Pſalm *He ſhall ſay, Thou art my Father; I have made h* Pſal. ii. 7, 12. *my firſt-born, higher than the Kings of the Earth; T art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; Kiſs the So leſt he be angry; Bleſſed are all they that put their tr in him*, are alledged by *R. Jonathan, R. Nathan, Selomoh, Aben-ezra*, and others, to prove that t *Meſſias* muſt be the very Son of God. And the Paſſages cannot be underſtood of any common Son Jer. xvii. 5. Man, becauſe it is written, *Curſed be the Man t truſteth in Man, and maketh Fleſh his Arm.* Th they likewiſe affirm him to be the Word of God t Iſa. xlv. 17. Father. Where *Eſaias* ſays, *Iſrael ſhall be ſaved vah*, or *the Lord*, is conſeſt to ſignifie *Chriſt*. *Jon Chald. Paraphr.* *than* turns it, *Iſrael ſhall be ſaved by the word of G* Hoſ. i. 17. *Hoſea* ſaith, *I will ſave the houſe of* Judah *by* Jehov *the Lord their God*. *Jonathan, I will ſave* Judah *by t* Pſal. cx. 1. *Word of their God. David, The Lord ſaid to m Lord: Jonathan*, the Lord ſaid unto his Word, S *thou at my right hand:* And *R. Iſaac Arama*, in h *In* xlvii. *Gen.* Comment upon *Geneſis*, expounds that Paſſage, *H ſent his Word, and healed them*; by *God*'s ſending th *In* x. *Gen.* *Meſſias*, who is *God's Word:* And *R. Simeon*, upo Job. xix. 26. that of *Job, I ſhall ſee God in my Fleſh*, infers that th *Word of God* ſhould take Fleſh of a Woman. Nay which is yet more, ſome Doctors of great Autho R. Ibba. & R. Simeon *in Zoar.* rity among the *Jews*, have interpreted that Paſſage of *Deut.* iv. 6. and *Iſa.* vi. 3. of the Trinity of Per ſons

ons in Unity of Eſſence: And ſay, that the Three *Jehovahs* in One, and the Three *Holies* in the other; are as if the Prophet had ſaid, Holy Father, or God the Father; Holy Son, or God the Son; Holy Spirit, or God the Spirit: which Three *Holies* make but one Lord God of *Sabbaoth*.

Once more, This Diſpute between us and the *Jews* receives great Light and Authority from their Learned *Philo*; one of the greateſt Men that wrote of their Nation, after the Inſpiration of Scripture ceaſed. And he in his Book of the Baniſhment of the *Jews*, hath Words to this effect; "What time may be appointed for our Return home is hard to be determin'd. Tradition tells us, We muſt wait for the death of a High Prieſt, but of theſe ſome die ſooner, ſome later: But I am of Opinion, this High Prieſt ſhall be the Very *Word* of God, who ſhall be void of all Sin, whether voluntary, or involuntary; whoſe Father ſhall be *God*, and this Word ſhall be the Wiſdom of that Father, by which all things in this World were created. His Head ſhall be anointed with Oyl, and his Kingdom ſhall flouriſh and ſhine for ever. This was written by *Philo*, when he little thought that the High Prieſt whom he ſo much expected, the ſame *Word of God*, whoſe Kingdom he deſcribed, was then already come into the World. And thus much ſhall ſuffice for our Second Conſideration, what manner of *Meſſias* was foretold to, and expected by the *Jews*.

3. The *Third* thing to be enquired into, is the Power and Authority of this *Meſſias*; and whether he ſhould change, or ſet aſide the Law of *Moſes*: which is another Point conteſted by the *Jews*, no leſs eagerly than the former. For we affirm with St. *Paul*, That the Law of *Moſes* was intended to entertain the *Jews* only for a time, by its outward Signs and Ceremonies; that it was their *Schoolmaſter to lead them to Chriſt*, to fit them for a Diſpenſation Galat. iii.

of Faith; and then, that it ſhould be laid aſide, and a far more perfect Law eſtabliſh'd in its ſtead.

Hebr. x. Acts xv. Hebr. ix. Hebr. x. Deut. xiii. 14. Lev. v. and xxiii. Exod. xxiii. Deut. xxvii.

We prove, That the Law of *Moſes* was an imperfect Law; that it was a Burthen too heavy for the *Jews* themſelves to bear: A Carnal Commandment, conſiſting principally of external Services: A Law of Terror and Fear, not of Love and a Free-Spirit: A Shadow and Figure of things to come; and conſequently was to ceaſe, when the things ſo prefigured were actually preſent: A Law peculiar to that People, and to be exerciſed only in that Countrey; nay great part of it, but in one place of that Countrey neither.

Now then, ſay we, How is it poſſible, that a Law, made for the *Jews* and their Land only, ſhould ſerve for the Times of the *Meſſias*, which were to take in all the Nations of the whole Earth? How could the Feſtivals and Sacrifices, allowed to be celebrated and offered only at *Jeruſalem*, be obſerved by Chriſtians diſperſed every where over the World? Is it not therefore manifeſt, that this Law, to uſe St. *Paul*'s words, *was only the bringing in of a better hope?* contrived to wean that People, prone to Idolatry, from the Corruptions of *Egypt*, by outward and bodily Obſervances, till *Chriſt* ſhould come and ordain a perfect Law; a Law of Spiritual and inward Perfection; a Law of Love and Liberty; a Law common to all Men, and fitted for every Place and Perſon; a Law ſupportable and eaſy, ſweet, and light, plain, and brief, and ſenſible, a Law for the poor as well as the rich, and in a word, a Law of Faith working by Charity? In this the *Great Prophet* to be raiſed to that people reſembled *Moſes*, in that he was to be a Lawgiver; but more to be heard and obeyed, in Proportion as the Law he gave was more excellent. *Now no other Prophet aroſe* before, *like unto Moſes*, becauſe none of them had authority to impoſe Laws as *Moſes* did, but were all bound to obſerve that Law,

Heb. vii. 19.

which

which he had left them; 'till *Chriſt* came, who was like *Moſes* in this authority of impoſing a new Law, and ſuperſeding that which he found already in uſe. Hence is that Prediction of the *Meſſiah*'s Kingdom, *Out of Sion ſhall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from* Jeruſalem. Which cannot be meant of *Moſes*'s Law, publiſhed eight hundred years before, and ſetting out, not from *Sion*, but *Sinai*: But of *Chriſt*'s Law it is true, that this began from *Sion*, and *Jeruſalem*, and from thence was ſpread over the whole World. Hence the ſame Prophet ſays of that time, *In that day ſhall there be an Altar to the Lord in the midſt of the Land of* Egypt; *And the Lord of Hoſts ſhall be known to* Egypt *in that day, and the* Egyptians *ſhall do ſacrifice and oblation.* Which could not be true of the Law of *Moſes*, for by that Law the *Egyptians* could not have Altar or Sacrifice: But it was accompliſhed at Chriſt's Coming, when that Nation became Chriſtians, and enjoy'd ſuch an Altar and Sacrifice, as our Religion makes uſe of. Iſai. ii. 3. Iſai. xix. 19, 21.

The ſame is again foretold by God in *Malachi*, *I have no pleaſure in you, neither will I accept your offering: For from the riſing of the Sun, even to the going down of the ſame, my name ſhall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incenſe ſhall be offered to my name, and a pure offering: For my name ſhall be great among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Here we have *Firſt* a Rejection of the *Jewiſh* Sacrifices, and conſequently of the *Moſaick* Law which inſtituted it; and *Secondly*, a promiſe of acceptance to the *Gentiles*, in a Worſhip more grateful than the former, ſuch as might be performed every where, and not confin'd to one ſingle place, as the *Jewiſh* Sacrifices had been. In a word, God declares, *he had given* to the Iſraelites *Statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they ſhould not live, i. e.* ſuch as had no intrinſick virtue of their own, nor were of perpetual Obligation, but only Mal. i. 10, 11. Ezek. xx. 25.

to

to laſt, till the period appointed for them: Concerning which he ſays by the Prophet *Jeremy*, *Behold the days come when I will make a new Covenant with the houſe of* Iſrael, *and with the houſe of* Judah; *and not according to the Covenant, that I made with their fathers, in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of* Egypt. So that, at the coming of Chriſt, which is treated of at large in that Chapter, there was to be a New Covenant, and this in Terms and Conditions different from the former Covenant, which God had ſtruck with that People at their paſſage out of *Egypt* to the Holy Land.

Jerem. xxxi. 31.

And now upon the whole Matter, we ſee, that Chriſt was foretold, promiſed and prefigured from the beginning of the World; that he was to be real God as well as Man; that he came with Authority to Change the Law of *Moſes*; which, in the very nature and deſign of it, was but a Temporary and National Law; and to eſtabliſh Another, a new Covenant of his own, calculated for all times and places, and intended to continue for ever.

Theſe things muſt in reaſon be acknowledged wonderful, and ſufficient to engage the Belief of all, who ſhould ſee the accompliſhment of them, (which my *Third* Section ſhall prove by and by). But I have yet one thing more to urge, which is, the very particular Predictions of every important Act, Event, or Circumſtance, in the Coming, Incarnation, Birth, Life, Death, and Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Lord. For inſtance, the particular time when he ſhould appear in the World, (*Gen.* xlix. 10. *Dan.* ix. 26.) His being born of a Virgin, (*Iſai.* vii. 14.) The Place of his Birth, (*Mic.* v. 2.) The Murther of the Infants in the Coaſts of *Bethlehem*, (*Jerem.* xxxi. 15.) The eaſtern Princes coming to adore and offer him Gifts, (*Pſal.* lxxii. 10.) His preſentation in the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, (*Mal.* iii. 1.) His flight into *Egypt*, and return thence, *Hoſ.* xi. 1.) *John Baptiſt*'s preparing his way in the

the Deſart (*Iſa.* xl. 3. *Malach.* iii. 1.) His humility, and gentleneſs of Spirit in the diſcharge of his Office, (*Iſai.* xlii. 2.) His Miracles and Cures of Infirmities and Diſeaſes, (*Iſai.* xxix. 18. xxxv. 8. lxi. 1.) Dying for the Sins of the whole World, (*Iſai.* liii. *Dan.* ix. 26.) Being betrayed by his own Diſciple, (*Pſal.* xli. 10. lv. 14. cix. 8.) Sold for thirty pieces of Silver, and the buying a Field with the price of his Blood, (*Zech.* xi. 12, 13.) His triumphant Entry into *Jeruſalem* upon an Aſs, (*Zech.* ix. 9.) The buffeting and ſpitting upon his Face, (*Iſai.* l. 6.) The ſcourging and tearing his Body before his Death, (*Iſai.* liii. 5.) Dying between Malefactors, (*Iſai.* liii. 12.) The Vinegar given him to drink, the dividing of his Cloaths, and the Lots caſt for his Coat, (*Pſal.* lxix. 22. xxii. 18.) His reſurrection from the dead the third day, (*Pſal.* xvi. 9, 10. *Hoſ.* vi. 2.) His Aſcent into Heaven, and ſitting at the right hand of God, (*Pſal.* lxviii. 18. cx. 1.)

Theſe, and many more Particulars relating to the Meſſias, were revealed in Scripture, ſome four, ſome two, ſome one thouſand, and the laſt of all, above four hundred years, before Chriſt was born. And, if we lay all theſe things together, and conſider withal how exactly they were fulfilled in our Jeſus, (as I ſhall ſhortly ſhew;) If we add, that theſe Prophecies are handed down by the moſt profeſs'd and inveterate Enemies of Chriſtianity, and the ſame to a Tittle in their Bibles, as we have them in ours; if we reflect upon the invincible Evidence, produced before, of the Certainty and Evidence of the Old Teſtament Writings; we muſt needs be convinced, that it is ſcarce poſſible to imagine any thing could be done for the manifeſtation of any Truth, before it come to paſs, which was not done for the ſignification of the Meſſias his Coming into the World.

After

After all these Considerations peculiar to the *Jews*, I shall very briefly say somewhat with regard to the *Gentiles*. They indeed were to receive their principal Knowledge of this matter from the *Jewish* Nation, to whom the *Messias* was first and chiefly promised: and from whom the *Gentiles* must wait for our Saviour and his Apostles, as well as for the Scriptures which bore witness to them both. Their certain and sound understanding in the Mysteries of *Christ* must come from hence: But yet they had some particular warnings among themselves too, which, when join'd with that already said of the *Jews*, make much for confirmation of the Christian Truth. And for the better understanding this matter, we may observe, that besides those Intimations of the *Messias*, which might be gathered from the *Hebrew* Scriptures, translated into *Greek* many Ages before *Christ* was born; besides what might be gained by conversing with the *Jews* in their Dispersions and Captivities, there were Three ways of letting the *Gentiles* into these Mysteries: The *First* by Tradition and Writings of their Ancestors. The *Second*, by Prophecies of their own. The *Third*, by the Warnings and Confessions of their Idols and Oracles, especially upon the approach of *Christ*'s Birth into the World.

First, It is evident, that as the *Jews* had many things by Succession from their Forefathers, They from *Moses*, and He from the *Patriarchs*, so the *Gentiles* had a Succession of Doctrines from the Beginning: Though the lower they went the more corrupt they grew, and were darken'd in Divine Knowledge by the prevailing Idolatry of the Heathen World. The *Romans*, we know, derived their Learning from the *Græcians*; They from the *Egyptians*; These from the *Chaldæans*, *who were the First* People instructed in Divine Knowledge from *Adam*, *Methusalem*, and *Noah*, and others of the First Fathers.

Euseb. *Chron.*

Now

Now, ſome Chronologers ſay, that Three famous Men liv'd together in thoſe ancient Times. *Abraham*, the common Father of the *Jewiſh* Nation; *Job*, whom we know by his Book to have been a moſt holy and excellent Perſon; And *Zoroaſter*, whom we only know to have been a learned Man, and to have left great Teſtimonies of this to Poſterity. This *Zoroaſter* might very well be acquainted with *Noah*, for *Abraham* was born above threeſcore years before *Noah's* Death; *Noah* was born five hundred years before *Methuſelah* died, and *Methuſelah* lived more than two hundred years with *Adam*. It is not therefore unlikely, that *Abraham*, *Job*, and *Zoroaſter*, and others of the Contemporaries, might be inſtructed in the Myſteries of Religion, at the third hand from God himſelf. By *Noah* and his Sons, I mean, who had lived before the Flood, and ſeen *Methuſelah*, who lived many years with *Adam*. Hence I ſuppoſe it is, that in *Zoroaſter*'s Writings, produced by Authors of Repute, many plain Indications of the Son of God are to be found, whom he calls the *Second Mind*. And by the Writings of *Hermes Triſmegiſtus*, (who lived afterwards in *Egypt*, and had his Learning from *Zoroaſter*,) we find thoſe Heathen Philoſophers to have received a clear notion of the *Second* Perſon in the Trinity, whom *Hermes* ſtyles, *The firſt begotten Son of God, his only Son, his dear, eternal, immutable, and incorruptible Son, whoſe name is ineffable*. After him again the old *Greek* Poets, *Orpheus*, *Heſiod*, and others, expreſs themſelves to the ſame purport concerning the Son of God. And ſo did the *Platoniſts*, too tedious to be alledged here, and therefore I refer my Reader to *Origen*'s Book againſt *Celſus*, and St. *Cyril*'s Firſt Book againſt *Julian the Apoſtate*.

For the *Second* way, their Prophecies, *Lactantius* hath collected the Prophecies of the Sibyls, wherein the Birth, Life, Death, Glory and Judgment of the Son of God are deſcribed at large. Theſe are alledged

It is uncertain when *Zoroaſter* lived. *Scaliger* places him 800 years after *Abraham*. See *Scal.* Animadverſ.

Clem. Alex. *Strom* 1. Origen. *cont. Celſ.* 6. *Proc.* 2 & 3. *in Parm.* Plat. Merc. Her. in *Pœman. c.* 1. & *deinceps.*

alledged by the graveſt and moſt learned of the Fathers; *Juſtin Martyr*, *Origen*, *Arnobius*, *Lactantius*, St. *Cyril*, St. *Auguſtin*, and *Conſtantine* the Emperor; and may be conſulted at my Reader's Leiſure: Authorities of great Name, but yet I inſiſt not on theſe Prophecies, becauſe their being genuine is now ſo much diſputed by learned Men.

The *Third* way I mentioned, as peculiar to the *Gentiles*, is the Confeſſion of Idols and Oracles. Eſpecially, when the ſeaſon of Chriſt's appearance drew on, and they began to feel the over-ruling influence of his Power and Virtue. Sundry inſtances of this kind might be produced, but I ſhall content my ſelf with two. The *Firſt*, that Anſwer of *Apollo* to one of his own Prieſts, conſulting him about God and the true Religion. *O thou unhappy Prieſt, why doſt thou enquire of me concerning God, the Father of all things, and concerning this moſt renowned King's dear and only Son, and of the Spirit that containeth all? Alas! That Spirit will conſtrain me ſhortly to deſert this habitation and place of Oracles.* The other to *Auguſtus Cæſar* a little before Chriſt's Birth. Who, now beginning to decline apace, and curious to know who ſhould reign after him, would needs apply to the Delphick Oracle for Information. *Apollo* after long Silence, uttered theſe ſurprizing words: *A Hebrew Child, who ruleth over the Gods, commandeth me to leave this dwelling, and repair to hell. But do you however depart in Silence from my Altars.* Thus the Evil Spirit, though forced to confeſs his Impotence, was deſirous to ſave his Credit, and therefore prohibited the revealing this Secret. With which however *Auguſtus* much confounded, is ſaid, upon his return to *Rome*, to have erected an Altar inſcribed, *The Altar of the firſt begotten Son of God.*

Suid. *in Thulis.* Porphyr. & Plutarch. *de Oracul.*

Suet. *in vit. Auguſt.* Niceph. *l.* 1. *c.* 17.

And thus I have ſhewn, that the Coming of the Meſſias was ſignified both to *Jew* and *Gentile*, by all

ll the Methods that in reaſon could be expected r deviſed. By Prophecies, Signs, Types, Cere-nonies, Traditions, and by the forced Confeſſion f Idols themſelves. Nay, not his coming only, ut the End of it; to be a Saviour of the World, o die for Sin, to ordain a new Law, and inſtitute more perfect Society of Men: The Manner of his oming, the Time of his appearance: And all this, efore *Chriſt* or Chriſtians were known in the World. remains now, that we examine, whether theſe ircumſtances, foretold ſo long before, do really gree in our *Jeſus*, whom we believe to be the ue Meſſias. And this ſhall be the Subject of the llowing *Sections*.

SECT. III.

How the former Predictions were fulfilled in our Jeſus, *while upon Earth.*

THERE is a great difference to be obſerved in the Controverſy concerning the *Chriſtian Religion*, according as the Enemies we have to deal with, are *Jews* or *Gentiles*. The *Gentile* diſagreeth with us in all the Points here alledged, but the *Jew* n ſeveral of them ſtands with us, and for us. He offereth his Life in defence of our Principles, but s never to be reconciled to our Application of thoſe Principles. Nor will he be moved by Scripture or Reaſon, to allow, That they were or can be made good in our *Jeſus*. And in this Obſtinacy, he ex-ceeds the *Gentiles*; for as ſoon as they come to un-derſtand the Prophecies and Promiſes in the Old Teſtament, they make little difficulty in believing he Accompliſhment of them in the New: And few of thoſe, ſince our Saviour's time, have become *Jews*, who have not ſhortly after been brought o-ver to be *Chriſtians*.

And

And yet this very Oppoſition of the *Jews* is a great Argument for *Jeſus*, and the Truth of his Religion. For this likewiſe was foretold long ago: *The ſame Stone, which the builders refuſed, is become the Head-ſtone of the Corner: This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our Eyes.* And not only *David*, but *Iſaiah* complains greatly of the incredulity of that people, and their inflexible oppoſition againſt the *Meſſiah* and his Doctrine; inſomuch that this peremptory Refuſal is for our advantage; and whomſoever that Nation ſhould have readily received and acknowledged, would have this great Argument againſt his being the true *Meſſias*. But yet to ſatisfy the World how little ground there is for ſuch Unbelief, I ſhall with all convenient Brevity run over the chief Circumſtances relating to *Jeſus*, while upon Earth: And by the Teſtimony of his Enemies themſelves, examine, Whether the Prophecies and Signs of the *Meſſias* were not duly fulfilled in him and his Actions. The whole of which Conſideration ſhall be reduced to theſe *Four* Heads. (1.) How the Time propheſied of the *Meſſiah*'s appearance ſuits with that of our Lord's coming. (2.) The Particulars of his Birth and other Events, before he began to preach. (3.) His Life, Miracles, and Doctrine. And (4.) Laſtly, His Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcent into Heaven.

Pſal. cxviii. 22, 23.

Iſa. vi. xxviii. liii.

Firſt, For the Time at which our Saviour came into the World, it is agreed by all, whether Pagan, Jewiſh, or Chriſtian Writers, to have been while *Auguſtus* was Emperor, toward the End of his Reign, and when *Herod* ruled in *Judæa*. The Three Monarchies of *Aſſyria*, *Perſia*, and *Greece*, were then ended; and the Fourth, that of the *Romans*, greater than any of the former, was then (according to *Daniel*'s Prophecy) in its moſt flouriſhing ſtate. The Civil Wars were compoſed, and, after infinite bloodſhed and confuſion, an univerſal peace ſettled

Dan. ii.

ettled. Which agrees exactly with that time assign-
d by *Daniel* for the Messiah's appearance, to set up
n everlasting Kingdom throughout all the World.
2. *Isaiah* had likewise foretold, (more than a
undred years before *Daniel*) that *Christ* should be
Prince of Peace, that *of his Government and Peace* Isaiah ix.
here shall be no End; and *David* before Him, that, 6, 7.
his Days shall be abundance of Peace. Which ex- Psal. lxxii.
ressions, though chiefly regarding the tranquility
f Mens minds, to which the Christian Doctrines
ave so great a Tendency, yet (considering how
ecessary an outward peace was for the quiet plant-
g of the Gospel, and after how wonderful and
rprizing a manner this was brought about, when
e *Roman* Empire was so fresh;) even This is a
reat Argument that such a time was very proper
r the *Messiah*'s coming, so far as concerns the state
f the World in general.

If we descend to the condition of the *Jewish* Nation in particular, we shall find an exact accom-
lishment of old *Jacob*'s Prophecy, concerning *the* Gen. xlix.
cepter departing from Judah at *Shiloh*'s coming. *He-* 10.
od an *Idumæan* Stranger, having just then extin-
uished the Government of that Line, and by many
icked Arts and Murthers usurp'd it to himself,
hich is the first time the Succession had fail'd in
hat Tribe, from the days of *David*, the first King
f it. Till the Captivity the Scripture shews the
escent of all their Kings; During their stay in *Ba-*
ylon, they were permitted to chuse a Governor
f that house, whose Title was *Reschgalutha*. Af-
er their return, *Zorobabel* was their Chief; and O-
hers down to the *Maccabees*. From whom down
o *Hyrcanus* and *Aristobulus*, whom *Herod* slew, the
ame Line continued in command, as *Josephus* hath
ssured us. So that by this Prophecy it is plain,
Jesus was born at a proper Time appointed for the
Messias, when there was neither Prince nor Gover-
nor left of that Tribe, and the *Jews* descended

from it ceaſed to be a ſettled People or Common-wealth quickly after.

4. Another Prophecy affirms, That the *Meſſiah* ſhould come, before the ſecond Temple (built by *Zorobabel*, upon the *Jews* return from the *Babyloniſh* Captivity) ſhould be deſtroy'd by the *Romans*. Hag. ii. 8, 9. *Haggai* the Prophet comforts the Builders and the People in theſe words; *The Silver is mine, and the Gold is mine, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts: The Glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts: And in this place will I give peace, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Now the difficulty is, in what reſpect this Temple excelled the former; not in Pomp and Magnificence, or any thing preferable in the Building or Ornaments; for we are told Ezra iii. 12, 13. The old Men wept, who remembred the former Temple, and ſaw this ſo much inferior to it: And this very Promiſe is deſign'd to take off that Grief Ver. 3, 4. for thus it begins: *Who is there among you that ſaw this houſe in her firſt Glory, and how do you ſee it now? Is it not in your eyes in compariſon of it as nothing? Yet now be ſtrong*, &c. And hence God mentions the *Silver and Gold*, as his; to ſhew, that the abundance or the want of theſe were of no conſideration with him: And notwithſtanding the meanneſs of the Fabrick, *this houſe ſhall be filled with Glory*; nay, *with greater Glory than the former*; by ſome other way preferable to the Sumptuouſneſs of the Building. But beſides this difference, the Learned *Jews* obſerve five things of great Importance, which added much to the Dignity of the former Temple, to have been all wanting in this Second. The Fire ſent from Heaven to conſume the Burnt-offerings; The Glory of God, or bright Cloud between the *Cherubims*; The Spirit of Prophecy; The Preſence of the *Ark*; and the *Urim* and *Thummim*. So that all theſe Preeminences being loſt, there remains no other account to be given of this, than the actual preſence of God incarnate

arnate, that is, the *Meſſias*, in his own Temple: nd ſo the accompliſhment of *Malachi*'s Prophe- *Behold I will ſend my Meſſenger, and he ſhall pre-* Mal. iii. 1. *e the way before me; and the Lord ſhall ſuddenly e to his Temple, even the Meſſenger of the Cove- t whom ye delight in, behold he ſhall come, ſaith Lord of Hoſts.* The meaning whereof muſt needs that *Chriſt* muſt appear in the Second Temple, *Jeſus* really did, and conſequently muſt be born ore that Temple was deſtroyed; ſo that he can- be ſtill to come, now that that Temple hath n finally demoliſhed for more than ſixteen hun- d years: Which final Deſtruction it is likewiſe arkable that *Daniel* hath determined, to a ſhort Dan. ix. e after the birth and death of the *Meſſias*. And 26, 27. tory ſhews that *Jeruſalem* was deſtroyed, and Foundations of the Temple ras'd by *Titus*, a- t forty years after *Jeſus* was put to death. Con- ing which Prophecy of *Daniel*, where the end he *Jewiſh* Polity is determined to *ſeventy weeks*, all ſuffice to obſerve, that the *Jews* computed, etimes by Weeks of Days, and ſometimes by *See* Levit. eks of Years. That the former could not be 23 & 25. nt here, is plain, becauſe there are but ſeven Dan. x. 2. eks aſſigned for building of the Temple and City, which were not finiſhed under forty nine rs; That is, ſeven Weeks of Years. And this koning falls in right with the Death of our *Je-* and the ſacking of *Jeruſalem* by the *Romans*. either Reckoning muſt be ſo long ſince expired o take away all ground for the *Jews* expectation *Meſſiah* ſtill to come.

This Time of our Lord's Birth receives farther nfirmation from the Traditions and Obſervations the ancient *Jews*, which all center'd about the e of *Auguſtus* his Reign. The *Thalmud* fre- *Thalmud.* ntly mentions a Tradition of one *Elias* that the *Tract. San.* rld ſhould laſt ſix thouſand years. Two thou- *cap Helec.* & *alib.* d before the Law, Two under the Law, and Two

more afterwards, under the Meſſias. Which laſt period could not, by all computation, commence far from the Birth of *Jeſus*. And the *Rabbins* long ſince complained, that there ſeemed to be then more than ſeven hundred years paſt, ſince the time, when the Meſſias, according to the Scripture predictions ought to appear, and therefore they wonder'd what ſhould move God to defer his coming ſo long. *Maimonides*, a Perſon of mighty reputation, and ſtyled the *Teacher of Righteouſneſs* among the Jews, who lived about the year of Chriſt 1140, thinks the time for the Meſſiah's appearance to have been lapſed at leaſt a thouſand years, according to the Scripture Prophecies; and that God delays this Bleſſing as a Puniſhment for the Sins of his People: And *Elias* ſays, that Chriſt was to be born indeed before the deſtruction of the Second Temple, but yet, ſays he, for our Sins he hides himſelf for a Seaſon, that we be worthy of his coming. So that Scripture, Tradition, and Obſervation all agree, that about *Herod*'s Time, the Meſſias was to be born. Hence grew that publick Fame mentioned by *Tacitus*, *Suetonius*, and *Joſephus*, of *an univerſal Lord over the whole World*. Which Prophecy ſome of the *Romans* contemned, others applied it to *Veſpatian*; and *Herod* feared it ſo much, that for this reaſon he took ſpecial care to extinguiſh all the Line of *David*.

Thalmud. Tract. Avodazara.

Maimon. *Epiſt. ad* Jud. Afric.

Thalmud. Tract. Sanct. c. Helec.

Tacit. l. 2. Suet. *in Veſ.* Joſeph. *de Bel. Jud. l. 7. c* 11.

This made the Wiſemen ſo intent upon the Star at our Lord's Birth; and the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* ſo inquiſitive whether *John* were the Chriſt; that occaſion'd that queſtion to our Lord himſelf, *How long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly.* This, Laſtly, gave ſo many Seducers opportunity to impoſe upon the People with lying Pretences, as *Judas*, *Theudas*, and others. Of which falſe Chriſts it is very obſervable, ſet up themſelves, between the time of *Herod*'s attaining to the Government, and the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*: That being the time, when the Chriſt was

John i. 19, 20. John x. 24.

enerally expected, and ſo then the People were ady to take ſuch Impreſſions of Deceit.

Since then, (to conclude this *Firſt* particular) ere met ſo many ſigns and arguments together out the time of *Jeſus* his Birth, as, The general eace of the *Roman* Empire; The Tranſlation of e Government from *Judah*; The deſtruction of the cond Temple; The juſt Calculation of *Daniel*'s eeks; The Obſervation and Traditions of *Rab-*'s; The univerſal Expectation of the *Jews*; And w the palpable Experience of more than ſix-n hundred years, ſince our *Jeſus* his Appearance, herein the *Jews* in vain expect another Meſſias; nce they are diſperſed over the face of the whole arth, without Temple, or Law, or Sacrifice, or ophet, or Promiſe of Reſtoration; (which never ppened to them in any of their Exiles, Captivities, Deſolations, before the death of *Jeſus*;) Theſe ings laid fairly together give us abundant and doubted ground to conclude, that *Jeſus* was born the preciſe time appointed, and foretold by God's oly Spirit, and conſequently, that he was the Only rue Meſſias and Saviour of the World. A Truth hich will be yet more fully evinced by my

II. Second Conſideration, which relates to his amily, his Conception, his Birth, Circumciſion, ing worſhipped by the Wiſe-Men, preſented in e Temple, and carried by flight into *Egypt*.

1. As to his Lineage; No Man ever denied *Jeſus* be deſcended of the Tribe of *Judah*, and of the ouſe of *David*. This is proved by the Genealo-es in St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke:* Confirmed by his Mother and reputed Father going up to *Bethlehem* e City of *David* to be taxed. The Scribes and harifees and unbelieving *Jews*, who object his eing a Carpenter's Son, are never found to have bjected againſt him, that he was not of the Family f *David*. And yet this, could it have been made ut, would have been a weightier Point, than all the

Matt. i. Luke iii. Luke ii.

reſt, and have put an end at once to the Controver
ſy, whether he were the very *Meſſias*. Nay, th
Thalmud. Tract. Sanhed. c. Nigmarhad. *Jewiſh* Thalmud it ſelf declares, *That Jeſus of* Naz
reth *who was crucified, was of the Blood Royal fro*
Zorobabel, *of the houſe of* David.

2. The Manner of his Conception, and the Me
ſage of the Angel, do indeed principally depe
upon the relation and credit of the Virgin her ſel
who alone was privy to it; and upon the Teſtim
ny of *Joſeph* to whom it was revealed by an Ang
afterwards. But yet if a Man conſider the Circum
ſtances of the thing, the Character of the Reporter
the great improbability, that *Joſeph*, had he n
been fully ſatisfied of this truth, ſhould ſo patient
conceal a thing ſo much againſt the Law, and
Auguſt. *de Trin. lib* 4. *c.* 5. *& cont. Jud. c.* 5. Chryſoſt. gainſt himſelf; The Innocent Age of the Bleſſ
Mother, not exceeding fifteen at moſt, (as St. *A*
guſtine and other Fathers prove.) All theſe thin
make it moſt unlikely, and morally impoſſible, th
this matter ſhould be invented, and paſs upon t
World. To all which if the Reader would a
that Prophecy of Hers, that *All generations ſho*
call her Bleſſed, then moſt improbable, but now e
actly fulfilled, there need no more or greater Circum
ſtances to put this truth out of all reaſonable doubt.

3. As to the kind and manner of his Nativi
the Scripture is expreſs, that the *Meſſiah* muſt
Iſai. vii. 14. born of a Virgin; *Behold a Virgin ſhall conceiv*
and ſhall bring forth a Son, ſays *Iſaiah* to King *Ahaz*
and gives this as a ſign, or marvelous inſtance,
the Houſe of *David*, of a moſt miraculous De
verance, which the Love of God had in reſerv
R. Sim. Ben. Johai. *in Gen.* ii. R. Moſes Hadar. *in Pſal.* lxxxv. *& in Gen.* xxv. for them. But ſuch a ſign it could not be, if th
latter *Rabbins* evaſion were juſt, who interpret th
Text of a *Young Woman* only. And therefore th
Greek renders it very truly, by a word which ad
mits of no ambiguity. And ſo the ancient *Jew*
underſtood it. One of them upon thoſe words o
the Pſalmiſt, *Truth ſhall bud out of the Earth*, ob
ſerves

ſerves, it is not ſaid, ſhall be-ingendred, but ſhall bud; to denote, that the *Meſſias*, who is meant by Truth, ſhall not be begotten as other Men are: And in another place he alledges another *Rabbi* of the ſame opinion, and that he proved it from thoſe words of the cx^th *Pſal. From the womb of the Morning thou haſt the dew of thy Youth.*

And this miraculous Birth is again as plainly foretold by thoſe words of *Jeremy*; *The Lord hath created a new thing in the Earth*; *A Woman ſhall compaſs a Man.* The Prophecies of the *Sibyls*, (as *Betuleius* hath delivered them to us) mention the Mother of this Spiritual King, as a moſt pure and holy Virgin. And *Clem. Alexandrinus* ſays that *Simon Magus* pretended himſelf born of a Virgin, that he might not be thought inferior to *Jeſus*, in this important Point. Jer. xxxi. 22. *Recog.*

4. *Bethlehem* where *Jeſus* was born, hath been long foretold and known, for the place deſigned for *Chriſt*'s Birth. *Thou* Bethlehem Ephrata, *though thou be little among the thouſands of* Judah, *yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in* Iſrael; *whoſe goings forth have been from of old, from everlaſting.* By which words *Micah* deſcribes the ſingle Privilege of this, though but a ſmall Town, in compariſon of many other belonging to the Tribe of *Judah*: That in it, that Governor of *Iſrael* ſhould be temporally born, whoſe divine Birth was before the World from all Eternity. And thus the great Author of the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe, who dy'd before *Chriſt* was born, and alſo *R. Selomoh*, and *R. Hacadoſch* interpret this Paſſage in their Commentaries upon *Micah*. And ſome have thought this to be contained in that Memorable Paſſage of *David*, *Pſalm* cxxxii. 3, 4, 5, 6. Mic. v. 2.

5. The Angels appearing to the Shepherds at our Lord's Nativity is a Circumſtance depending upon the Credit and Honeſty of the Reporters. And no Man can ſuppoſe they would ever feign a Story,

which, had it been falſe, were moſt eaſy to have been confuted by the Teſtimony of thoſe Shepherds themſelves.

Iſa. ix. Gen. xlix. Pſal. lxxii.

6. Of the Name given our Lord at his Circumciſion, it is remarkable, that *R. Hacadoſch*, proves in his Cabaliſtical way, that the Meſſiah's name, at his coming, ſhould be *Jeſus:* For which among others he aſſigns this reaſon, that, as the Name of Him, who firſt brought the *Jews* out of Bondage into the Land of Promiſe, was *Jeſus* or *Joſhua*; ſo muſt his Name be *Jeſus*, who ſhall the ſecond time deliver them from their preſent Bondage, and reſtore them to the poſſeſſion of their ancient Country. Which is the chief benefit the latter *Jews* expect from the Meſſias. Nor is it probable, that our Lord's Mother ſhould impoſe this Name of her own head, ſince thoſe of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, *Jacob* and *David*, were commonly in higher eſteem, and, had not a particular Revelation interpoſed, more likely to have been given to this Child, than One which had not belonged to any of the moſt Eminent Patriarchs.

Mat. ii.

7. The Coming of the Wiſemen from the *Eaſt* is mentioned by St. *Matthew*, as a matter publickly known. For ſuch the Conſult of the Scribes and Phariſees, upon their Enquiry where *Chriſt* the new King was born, and the barbarous Murther of ſo many Innocent Children, muſt needs have rendred it. And the Evangeliſt could not have given the Adverſaries of our Religion a greater Advantage againſt him, than to have begun his Goſpel with a notorious Untruth, in which infinite Perſons then alive could have eaſily diſproved him. The Star, by

L. 2. c. 25.

which they were guided, is mentioned by *Pliny*, under the name of a Comet, appearing in the latter end of *Auguſtus* his Reign, and exceeding different from any which had ever been ſeen before. It was judged (he tells us) by the whole College of Soothſayers, contrary to the generality of

thoſe

thoſe extraordinary Stars, to portend ſome univerſal Good to the World, and for that reaſon had an Image of Metal erected to it at *Rome*. *Is Cometa unus*, ſays he, *toto orbe colitur*. *Origen* mentions one *Chæremon* a Stoick much concerned at the conſideration of this Star, and taking a journey into *Judæa*, to inform himſelf fully of the matter; becauſe after the appearance of it, he found the Power of his Gods ſenſibly decay. And *Chalcidius* a Platonick adds, that the *Chaldæan* Aſtronomers did from hence infer ſome God to have deſcended from Heaven, for the Benefit of Mankind. *Cont. Celſ.* Chalcid. *apud.* Marſ. Ficin. *de Stella.*

8. St. *Luke* relates the preſenting of *Jeſus* in the Temple after forty days, according to the Law of *Moſes* concerning the Firſt-born of Males; and takes notice withal of two reverend Perſons, *Simeon*, and *Anna* the Propheteſs, coming in at the ſame time, and acknowledging him for the Saviour of the World. Foretelling ſeveral things which ſhould afterwards happen, to him, his Followers, and his Bleſſed Mother. Luke ii.

9. His flight into *Egypt* for fear of *Herod*, St. *Mathew* obſerves to agree with a Prediction of *Hoſea* long before; and *Iſaiah* is likewiſe ſuppoſed to have deſcribed it, when he ſaid, *Behold the Lord rideth upon a ſwift Cloud, and ſhall come into* Egypt, *and the Idols of* Egypt *ſhall be moved at his preſence*. Which laſt Clauſe *Euſebius* argues to have been evidently fulfilled, in that eager zeal, by which the *Egyptians*, formerly of all Nations the moſt ſunk in, and prone to, *Idolatry*, abandoned their falſe Gods, and came early into the Faith. It follows in the Prophet, *and I will give the* Egyptians *over into the hand of a cruel Lord, and a fierce King ſhall rule over them*. Which was likewiſe accompliſhed about the time of our Lord's coming; for then, after many Ravages and Barbarities exerciſed upon them by the *Roman* Generals, *Pompey*, *Cæſar*, and *Anthony*; *Cleopatra*, their Queen, the laſt of the *Ptolomy* Line, was forced Matt. ii. Hoſ. xi. Iſai. xix. 1. *Dem. Evang. L.* 6. C. 20. & 9. C. 2, 3, 4 Iſai. xix. 4.

to

to flee; and *Auguſtus* poſſeſt himſelf of *Egypt*, and ſubjected it, as a Province, to the *Roman* Empire. But then conſider how *Iſaiah* concludes this matter after threatning ſo many temporal Afflictions: *In that day there ſhall be an Altar unto the Lord, in the midſt of the land of* Egypt; *they ſhall cry to the Lord, and he ſhall ſend them a Saviour; There ſhall be a bleſſing in the midſt of the land, whom the Lord of Hoſts ſhall bleſs, ſaying, Bleſſed be* Egypt *my People.* And ſo much for my *Second* Conſideration.

V. 19, 20, 24, 25.

III. The *Third* concerns the Life and Converſation, the Doctrine and Miracles of our *Jeſus*. Concerning whom, after his return out of *Egypt*, till his Baptiſm, which was in the thirtieth year of his Age, very little account is to be met with, either in Sacred or Prophane Story. That time being thought to have been employed in the common exerciſes and labours of a mean private life, that ſo he might at once demonſtrate both his real Manhood, and his Averſion to Idleneſs and Sloth.

Juſtin. *in Tryph.* Chryſ. *in Joan.* Aug. *de Trin. L.* 4. *C.* 5.

St. *John* Baptiſt is mentioned by all *Hebrew* Writers of that time, with great praiſe and admiration of his eminent Sanctity. *Joſephus* calls him a moſt excellent Perſon, ſtirring up the *Jews* to the ſtudy and practice of Virtue. He likewiſe adds, that *Herod*, partly enraged at the vaſt concourſe of People to him, and partly at the Sollicitation of *Herodias* his Brother's Wife, but his Concubine (for whom he had turn'd off his own Wife, the Daughter of *Aretas* King of the *Arabians*) firſt put him in Priſon, and ſoon after to Death. To which Murther that Author aſcribes the Calamities of that *Herod* and his whole Family. This Perſon is intended by that *Meſſenger*, whom the Lord in *Malachi* declares he would *ſend to prepare his way before him.* And this was done by *John*'s Preaching and Baptiſm of Repentance. Who, when *Jeſus* came to him, immediately knew and publiſhed him for the *Meſſias*, in the preſence of all the People, though he had never

Antiq. 18, 7.

Mal. iii. 1.

never ſeen him before. And this acknowledgment was confirmed by a Viſion and Voice from Heaven, publickly heard and ſeen by the multitudes; as three of the Evangeliſts teſtify. Which they durſt never have preſumed to do, had not the matter of fact been evident, and paſt danger of Contradiction. Now what greater Confirmation can we deſire of his being the true *Meſſias*, than that *John* the Baptiſt, (a Perſon of confeſſed Wiſdom and Virtue and Holineſs, in the opinion of our greateſt Adverſaries the *Jews*,) ſhould refuſe this Honour and Title when offered to himſelf, and place it upon *Jeſus*: That he ſhould ſend his Diſciples and Followers to Him, and direct them to obey his Doctrine? And this 'tis moſt evident he did, for not one of *John*'s Diſciples ever after could be inſtanced in, who was not a Chriſtian. Matth. iii. Mark i. Luke iii.

When *Jeſus* was baptized, he began to preach: And his whole Doctrine tended to the illuſtration of his Father's Glory, the declaring his Will, and the Reformation of Mens Manners. All centred in this common Principle, *The Love of God and our Neighbour*. His Manner and Style was eaſy and perſpicuous, though treating of moſt profound Myſteries: He had no Pomp of Rhetorick, no art of Inſinuation, no complying with the Corruptions of Human Nature, like the old Orators and Philoſophers. He did not incumber his Religion with outward Ceremonies, nor pollute it with Carnality, and a Worldly Spirit; But all was refined; All Purity and Simplicity; All Truth and Honeſty; All Humility, and Charity.

He diſannulled no one point of *Moſes*'s Law which was Moral and Spiritual, but explained, revived, and exalted ſuch to their juſt perfection. *Moſes* commanded external Obſervances, *Jeſus* inward Obedience. The Law ſaid, *Love your Friends* and Brethren; the Goſpel, *Love Enemies and Strangers*: *That* commands not *to kill*; *This* not to be *angry without*

without a cauſe, and when there is a cauſe, not to reproach in that anger. *That* prohibits actual Adultery; *This* wanton Looks, and the very kindling of unlawful deſires. *That* ſuffered no Extortion upon a *Jew*; *This* ſays, Defraud and deal hardly by no Man. The Law eſteem'd *Jews* only to be Neighbours; the Goſpel extends the importance of that word, and the duties of that Relation, to every Man alive. The Law appointed Sacrifices for Sin, of the Flock and the Herd; the Goſpel requires no Sheep or Oxen, but, inſtead of them, the much more precious Sacrifice of a contrite, humble, and believing Heart, depending upon the Blood of him that dyed for all, and recommended by ſincere and ſtedfaſt reſolutions of a better life. In a word, This Doctrine aims at the true and perfect ſervice of God, the Maker and Redeemer of Mankind; the exalting his name, and power, and goodneſs, and glory; and at the beating down the pride of Man's Heart, by repreſenting his Miſery, and lamentable Infirmities; at the contempt of this World and its Vanities; at the mortifying our Senſual Appetites, correcting and curbing our Paſſions; at the unfeigned love of others; at raiſing our Souls to Spiritual and Heavenly Thoughts and Objects; at peace of Conſcience, purity of Body; and in one word, at reſtoring us to a ſtate of Innocence and Simplicity, and Angelical Sanctity upon Earth, that ſo we may *be meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Heaven.* Such was the Doctrine of *Jeſus*, and ſuch as this the Prophets conſtantly foretold ſhould be the Doctrine of the *Meſſiah* at his Coming.

3. His Life and Converſation, even by the Teſtimony of his greateſt Adverſaries, was yet more admirable than his Doctrine; This being a moſt lively Picture, wherein all the Graces of that Doctrine were moſt beautifully expreſs'd. A Perſon of ſuch ſteddy Gravity, that he was never obſerv'd to be gay; Of ſuch profound Humility, that, though the Son of God,

God, he condeſcended to the meaneſt Offices of a Servant; Of ſuch invincible Meekneſs and Patience, that the moſt barbarous Injuries and inſolent Affronts never drew from him one angry word: In ſhort, ſuch as *Iſaiah* had declar'd ſhould *not ſtrive, nor cry, nor make his voice to be heard in the ſtreets*: Such as *Zechariah* foreſaw ſhould *come to Zion, meek and lowly*. And, as the Prophets had foretold, ſo the *Devils* themſelves could not forbear confeſſing the Virtue and Sanctity of the *Meſſias* to have been fulfill'd in the Perſon of JESUS. *Porphyry*, after ſeveral Oracles uttered by his Idols to this purpoſe, breaks out into theſe words; *It is ſtrange to conſider what Teſtimony the Gods give to the ſingular Piety and Virtue of* Jeſus; *for which they declare him rewarded with immortality; but yet theſe* Chriſtians *are deceived in calling him* God. And *Joſephus* the *Jew* ſays, *About this time liv'd one* Jeſus, *a wiſe Man, if it be fit to call him a Man; a worker of moſt aſtoniſhing Miracles, and a Maſter and Teacher of all who were willing to embrace the Truth.*

Iſai. xlii. Zech. ix. *De Laude Philoſ.* *Antiq.* 18. *cap.* 7.

Here we may obſerve great ſtreſs laid upon the Miracles of *Jeſus*, which come now in the next place to be conſidered. And, as this Hiſtory teſtifies ſuch Miracles to have been done, ſo are thoſe Miracles as expreſly foretold by the Prophets, as Marks of the true *Meſſias*. Of him it is declared, that he ſhould make proof of his Commiſſion, by giving ſight to the Blind, opening the Ears of the Deaf, looſing the Tongues of the Dumb, and conveying Strength and Agility to the Halt and Maimed. To which Predictions the *Jews* in their *Thalmud* agree, and acknowledge that the *Meſſias* ſhall be moſt wonderful in working Miracles. Their publick Commentary upon *Eccleſiaſtes* ſays, *All the former Miracles of Prophets and holy Men ſhall be nothing to the Miracles of the* Meſſiah *when he cometh.* And hence was that Queſtion among the *Jews*, *Shall* Chriſt, *when he cometh, do more Miracles than theſe*

Iſai. xxxv. *Tract. Baracoth.* *Midraſh-Coheleth. cap.* 1. John. vii. 31.

which this Man hath done? Now of thoſe Prophecies being accompliſh'd in our *Jeſus*, there can be no difficulty. For the *Jews* themſelves do not only bear Record in their *Thalmud* to his Miracles, but they mention many others not related by the Evangeliſts. And *Mahomet* in his *Alcoran* affirms *Jeſus* the Son of *Mary* to have been a great Prophet, and to have wrought his Miracles by the Power and Spirit of God only: And that he himſelf was ſent to confirm the Doctrine of *Jeſus* in all points, except that of his Godhead; but here, he pretends, *Jeſus* went too far, and was check'd by God for his preſumption when he return'd to Heaven.

Avoda-zara Coheleth. Alcor. Azoa. 4. 11. 13.

Thus much then we may gather from the Confeſſion of profeſt Enemies; and though this be a great deal, conſidering what Witneſſes it comes from, yet if they ſhould attempt to deny or diſſemble the matter, we are able to prove it upon them by undeniable Arguments; eſpecially in two Points, which there is no ſtanding out againſt.

The *Firſt* is, The calling and retaining his Apoſtles and Followers, which *Joſephus*, in the place laſt referred to, looks upon as a moſt ſtupendous thing. Theſe were Men of different Callings, Conditions, and Engagements in the World: And yet at the firſt word, they immediately quitted All, Father, Mother, Wife, Children, and all Temporal reſpects; and followed a Perſon, who had neither any thing to give, nor made them any Promiſes of Advantage in this World. One, that never ſpoke them fair, or delivered any Doctrine, which was not repugnant to Senſual Pleaſure, and the Charms of this Life, as abundantly appears by their own Writings, and Teſtimonies concerning him. One deſpiſed and rejected by the greater, and in common repute the better, ſort of the People; by the ſeemingly Wiſe and Learned of that Country; And, eſpecially by the Governing Party, ſuſpected as a dangerous Enemy to the State. One that had neither

her Friends in the World to bear him out, nor ſo much as a Houſe to put his Head in; and yet, notwithſtanding all theſe Diſcouragements, Men of worldly Buſineſs, Women of Families and Condition; nay, ſome of them great Sinners, and very looſe Livers before, forſook all their Temporal Expectations and Employments, and followed him with Inconvenience, Danger and Loſs. They continu'd with him in his Poverty and Afflictions; they were content to loſe their Lives for him, and choſe this as a leſs calamity than abandoning Him and his Service. Which is ſuch a Miracle, as never had a parallel in the whole World, and muſt needs be allowed to proceed from ſome Cauſe very extraodinary and above Nature.

The *Second* Particular I would mention conſiſts of ſuch Acts, as far exceed all Human Ability, and theſe done openly, in the ſight of his mortal Enemies, the *Jews*. Theſe the Evangeliſts have publiſhed to the whole World; and St. *Matthew* did it in the *Hebrew* Tongue, and at a time, when many Perſons yet ſurvived, upon whom they were wrought, or who might have been Witneſſes to the Truth of the things. Such was the raiſing *Lazarus* from the Dead in *Bethany*, a Village but a little diſtance from *Jeruſalem*, at whoſe Death and Burial many of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* muſt needs have been preſent (according to the *Jewiſh* Cuſtom of that time, mentioned by *Joſephus*.) They ſaw him interred, and all the Funeral Rites perform'd, and they ſaw him raiſed out of the Grave by *Jeſus* too, four days after. They eat, and drank, and converſed with him after his return to Life; they might ſee him every day in the Streets of *Jeruſalem*. And is it poſſible for this to be all a Fiction? John xi. *Antiq. lib.* 17. *cap.* 2.

Such again was the reſtoring *Jairus* the Ruler of the *Synagogue*'s Daughter, and the many Circumſtances which muſt needs have made it notorious. Such his raiſing the Widow's Son at *Nain*, in the preſence Mark v. Luke vii.

preſence of them who bore the Corps to his Burial.
John v. Such healing the Impotent Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*, when the City was crowded with People at
Mark v. the *Paſſover*. Such diſpoſſeſſing him that had the Legion of Devils, known to have raged in the Mountains for a long time, ſo that People durſt not paſs that way, and ſending the Evil Spirit into a Herd of Swine, with ſuch Power, as to drown two thouſand of them preſently in the Sea; whereupon a whole Country was put into ſo general a
John vi. conſternation, as to intreat he would depart out of their Coaſts. Such the Feeding and Feaſting five thouſand Men at once, beſides Women and Chil-
John ii. dren, with five Barley-loaves, and two ſmall Fiſhes. Such turning Water into Wine, before the Gueſts of a Marriage Feaſt. Such, Healing an incurable
Luke xiv. Dropſy at a *Phariſee*'s Table; and an Iſſue of Blood
Mat. ix. in the midſt of a mixt multitude. Theſe and Infinite other Miracles were done ſo publickly, and written ſo early, and when many would have been moſt zealous and heartily glad to diſprove them; that I cannot but conclude the Facts certain. And ſince theſe are above the power of Nature, and could be done by no power but GOD's, who will not, cannot, aſſiſt, or give teſtimony to a falſhood, it muſt follow that what *Jeſus* taught was true. And ſince he declared himſelf the *Meſſias*, his Miracles prove that he was ſo indeed, which is the Importance of his own Argument to the unbelieving *Pha-*
John x. 37, 38. *riſees: If ye believe not me, believe my Works; and if I do not the Works of the Father, believe me not.*

IV. I come now to the *Fourth* and laſt Branch of this Particular, which relates to the Paſſion, Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of *Jeſus*. About the firſt of which there is little or no Controverſy; ſince all his Enemies agree him to have been betray'd by his own Diſciple, apprehended and delivered up by the *Jews*, condemned and put to death by the *Gentiles*. *The Principal of his Countrey*, (ſays *Joſephus*) *having accuſed*

cuſed Jeſus, *and delivered him to* Pilate, *the then overnor of* Judæa *under the* Roman *Emperor, he tenced him to the Croſs.* The Enemies of *Chriſti-ity* do not only acknowledge, but boaſt in this; d one of the greateſt Quarrels and Pretences of andal taken at us, is, That we ſhould worſhip as Divine Perſon, a Man who died in that ignominious anner. But now if it can be made appear, that this was the wiſe and eternal Appointment of OD, the ſurpriſing Method which he thought fit take for redeeming Mankind; that theſe things re expreſly foretold by the Prophets, and thoſe ophets ſo underſtood heretofore by the Learned the *Jewiſh* Law; then, I preſume, every reaſon-le Reader will be ſatisfied, and content to ſubmit Fooliſhneſs of Man to the Wiſdom of GOD.

To begin with the firſt Step made by *Jeſus* toward Paſſion; that triumphant Entry, I mean, which made into *Jeruſalem.* After ſuch meaſures of In-uction, and ſuch evidence of Miracles had been orded, as were abundantly ſufficient, and the time dained for his Paſſion now approached, he came o the City upon an Aſs, attended by the multi-des, with a purpoſe to meet and receive his Death. nd this Solemn Approach was foretold by *Zecha-h*, ſome hundred of Years before: *Rejoyce greatly, Daughter of* Sion, *ſhout, O Daughter of* Jeruſalem, *bold thy King cometh unto thee. He is juſt, and ha-ng Salvation, lowly, and riding upon an Aſs, and upon Colt, the Foal of an Aſs.* Some few days after this, was betray'd and ſold by one of his own Diſci-es, as *David* long before had in many paſſages redicted. Then followed his Apprehenſion and proachful Treatment by the *Jews*, thoſe Buffet-gs and Spittings, ſo exactly agreeable to *Iſaiah*'s eſcription; *I gave my Back to the ſmiters, and my beeks to them that plucked off the Hair: I hid not my ace from ſhame and ſpitting.* After theſe barbarous dignities, the *Jews* delivered him up to the *Roman*

Zech. ix. 9.

Pſal. xli. lv. cix.

Iſa. l. 6.

Governor, and never ceaſed purſuing their implacable Spight, till they ſaw him actually upon the Croſs. Nay, even then too, he was uſed with all the cruelty and diſdain, which *David* in the Perſon of the *Meſſias*, had complained of ſo many Ages before. *They pierced my Hands and my Feet; they parted my Raiment among them, and upon my Veſture did they caſt lots. They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirſty, they gave me vinegar to drink. All they that ſee me laugh me to ſcorn; they ſhoot out their Lips, and ſhake their Heads, ſaying, He truſted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him if he will have him.*

Pſal. xxii. and lxix.

This for the Manner of his Death: But as to the End of it, the Scriptures frequently declare, he died for the Sins of Mankind. This was prefigur'd by the Sacrifice of *Iſaac*, and the lifting up of the *Brazen Serpent* in the Wilderneſs; in ſhort, by all the Bloody Sacrifices of the *Moſaical* Diſpenſation. It was foretold not only in the paſſages produced already, but moſt expreſly by *Daniel*, *The Meſſias ſhall be cut off, but not for himſelf:* And *Zechariah* foretells not only his Death, but the manner and circumſtances of it; when he ſays in the Perſon of *Chriſt*, *They ſhall look on me, whom they have pierced.* But if we would read this whole Matter ſet down ſix hundred Years before, as clearly as if the Author had been an Eye-witneſs of it, let us peruſe the liiid of *Iſaiah*, who to intimate the ſtrangeneſs of the Caſe, begins his Narration thus; *Who hath believed our Report?* And then goes on in Terms too well known to need repeating in this place. So particularly was the Death of *Chriſt* foretold to the *Jews*; nor do the Ancient Teachers among them pretend to fix any other Senſe upon theſe Paſſages. The *Thalmud*, now more than twelve hundred Years old, declares That their *Meſſias* at his coming, ſhall be put to death. The Author of the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe, who died before *Chriſt* was born, applies that Account of *Iſaiah* to the Murther of the *Meſſiah* by the *Jews*.

Gen. xxii. Num. xxi.

Dan. ix. 26. Zech. xii. 10.

R. S

Simeon, in the next Age after, cries out, *Wo be the Men of* Iſrael, *for they ſhall ſlay the* Meſſias: OD *ſhall ſend his Son in Man's Fleſh to cleanſe them, d they ſhall murder him.* *R. Hadarſan* proves out *Daniel*, That, when the *Meſſias* ſhall have preach'd lf ſeven Years, he ſhall be ſlain. The ſame is nfirm'd by the *Jews* ordinary Comment upon Pſalms; and this agrees exactly with the Ac- unt given by us Chriſtians, and our Evangeliſts. e three Hours Darkneſs at his Death *Euſebius* rms to be reported by ſeveral *Heathen* Authors; l among others, cites one *Phlegon*, a very exact rſon, who places it in the fourth Year of the two ndred and ſecond *Olympiad*, which falls in with eighteenth of *Tiberius*; the very Year wherein Saviour ſuffered: Nay, he is ſo exceeding par- lar, as to name the ſame Hours of the Day, ich our Evangeliſts do. *Æſculus*, an old *Aſtro- ner*, confirms this matter, and proves withal, at according to the Poſition of the *Sun* and *on*, there could not then happen any Natural E- ſe. *Dionyſius* the *Areopagite*, made the ſame Ob- vation upon the very Day of our Lord's Paſſion, g then five and twenty Years old, and yet well l'd in *Aſtronomy*, as appears from his own Books. d *Lucian* of *Antioch* uſed frequently to appeal to *Gentiles* own Hiſtory for a ſufficient Teſtimony theſe things.

Lib. de Spe.

Hadar. *in Dan.*

Midraſh Tehill.

Euſeb. *Chr. A. D.* 32. Phleg. Trallian. *l.* 24 *Chr.* 4. 4. *Olym.* 202.

Orig. *cont. Celſ. l.* 6. Suid. *in Jeſus.* Tertull. *Apolog.* Dion. Ar. *in Ep.*

Lucian *apud* Euſeb.

The next thing to be ſpoke of is *Jeſus*'s Reſurre- on: A point of all others moſt important, and refore exactly foretold by the Prophets, and pro- ſed by *Chriſt* himſelf, while converſing upon the rth. This was imply'd in all thoſe Predictions Glory, and Triumph, and Joy, to *Chriſt*'s Church r his Paſſion: For thoſe could never have receiv'd uſt accompliſhment, had not he riſen again from Dead. Both the Thing and the Time of it, re prefigur'd in *Jonas*: The former was foretold thoſe words of *David*, *My fleſh ſhall reſt in hope,*

Jon. ii. Pſal. xvi. 9, 10.

for thou wilt not ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee corruption.
Hoſ. vi. 2. The latter by *Hoſea*, *After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raiſe us up, and we ſhall live in his ſight.* To theſe predictions of the Prophets *Jeſus* often adds his own Promiſe, for the Comfort of his Diſciples, though at that time his Meaning was not ſo perfectly underſtood by them. Now if this Promiſe had extended to ſome very diſtant period, (like *Alcoran.* that of *Mahomet*'s Reviving after eight hundred *Azoar.* 17. Years) though there had been no intention to perform it, yet credulous Men might have been held in long Expectation and Suſpenſe, without any poſſibility of detecting the Cheat. But when *Jeſus* confin'd Himſelf to three Days, it cannot be ſuppos'd that he was not in very good earneſt; for otherwiſe the falſhood of his Word would ſoon have diſcover'd it ſelf. And therefore we will obſerve, what Proof there is that he was really as good as his Word. And here we have the Teſtimony of Men, whoſe only Hope, and Confidence, and Happineſs depends entirely upon the Truth of this Matter: His diſmay'd and afflicted Diſciples, who relate many Appearances made to them by their Maſter, in his own proper Human Body, after his return from the Dead. That to *Mary Magdalen*, who with other John xx. Mark xvi. Devout Women, came with Spices and Ointments to the Sepulchre. That to all thoſe Women together, in their return home. That to *Simon Peter* Matt. xxviii. alone. That to the two Diſciples travelling to *Em-* Luke xxiv. *maus.* That to all the Apoſtles aſſembled together 1 Cor. xv. privately, and with the doors ſhut, for fear of the John xx. *Jews.* That to the ſame Company, eight Days after, when *Thomas* was with them; at which time he eat and drank with them, and ſuffered his Body to be handled, and proved by them. That to *Peter* and John xxi. *John*, and other Diſciples, fiſhing at the Sea of *Tiberias.* That to the Eleven Apoſtles upon Mount Matt. xxviii. *Tabor.* That to five hundred Brethren at once men- 1 Cor. xv. tioned by St. *Paul.* That to St. *James*, as the ſame

Apoſtle

Apoſtle teſtifies. That to all his Apoſtles, Diſci- Acts i.
ples, and Friends, when he aſcended from the
Mount of *Olives* into Heaven. To which we may
add, That after his Aſcenſion, to St. *Paul* himſelf. 1 Cor. xv.
These are all recorded in Scripture, as Appear-
ances, though not to all indifferently, yet ſo many
and to ſuch numbers, as were competent and pro-
per Witneſſes: And ſuch Appearances as there could
be no deceit in: *For he ſhewed himſelf*, ſays the Acts i.
Text, *by many infallible proofs*; ſuch as *eating and
drinking* together, *and ſpeaking the things which per-
tain to the Kingdom of God, for the ſpace of forty days.*
And why ſhould the Truth of theſe Witneſſes be
ſuſpected, who had ſuch Convictions to ſatisfy them-
ſelves, whoſe All was concerned in not being im-
poſed upon, and who could have no temptation to
impoſe upon others? What Satisfaction could they
take in deviſing Fables of this kind? What Com-
fort would his dead Body concealed among them
afford? The *Jews* confeſs the empty Sepulchre, but
ſay, his Diſciples ſtole him away: And is this pro-
bable, that Men ſo dejected, ſo feeble, ſo appre-
henſive of danger, that they durſt not be known to
meet, nay not to be ſeen out of doors, till inform'd
by the Women, who had viſited the Sepulchre, that
their Lord was riſen, ſhould convey away his Body
from a ſtrong guard of Soldiers? Suppoſing them
couragious enough for ſuch an Attempt, could they
poſſibly have ſucceeded in it? How ſhould they
break open the Doors, burſt the Seal and Faſten-
ings of the Tomb, and carry their Lord off, with
ſuch deliberation, as to leave the *Grave-cloaths* wrap-
ped up, and laid by in order, never to be ſeen or
heard, and the Body never to be found after? But
allowing all this poſſible, what Profit, what Plea-
ſure or Conſolation could they propoſe to them-
ſelves by it? But eſpecially what account can we
give of that ſudden and mighty change in theſe
Mens Temper and Behaviour, upon that occaſion?

For they who were kept close, and were afraid of every thing, now came forth publickly, and with undaunted Confidence proclaimed this Resurrection, in the Hearing, and to the Face of their bitterest Enemies; affirming that they had seen him, spoken with him, handled him, conversed with him as before; and for confirmation of all this, they were ready to lay down their own Lives. This is such an alteration, that Life and Death are not more distant, than these Apostles, from what they had been but few Days before: Could all this, think you, proceed from a dead Body, got into their possession by stealth? Could the sight of a Body so mangled, and torn, and deformed, as our Lord's upon the Cross, have yeilded such astonishing degrees of Comfort? It is never to be imagined.

And therefore *Pilate*, considering these Circumstances, the unlikelihood of the Body being stolen, and the effects this Resurrection had upon *Jesus* his Disciples, examined into the matter, and got the whole truth out of the Guard. The Rising of *Jesus* before their Eyes, the terrible Earthquake, and the opening of the Sepulchre, the Terrors they had been in, which made them desert their Post, and the wicked Policy of the *Jewish* Rulers, who had put that ill-contriv'd Story into their Mouths thereby to stifle, if possible, the Belief of this Resurrection: All these Particulars *Pilate* transmitted by Letter to his Master *Tiberius* (then Emperor) to *Rome*; and withal, the Examinations and Confessions of several who had spoken with such as rose at the same time, and appeared to their acquaintance in *Jerusalem* and gave them assurance of *Jesus* his Resurrection: These Informations made such impression upon *Tiberius*, that he communicated them to the Senate, and moved, That *Jesus* might be admitted into the number of the *Roman* Gods; declaring his own Readiness to give the Imperial Suffrage and Assent to such a Decree. And upon the Senate's

Senate's refusal, he did not only express his Displeasure, but gave free Liberty for all that would, to believe in *Jesus*, and prohibited all his Officers upon Pain of Death, to molest any such, for their good affection and zeal to that Name. This *Tertullian* asserts of his own knowledge; who, living in *Rome*, and being a celebrated Pleader, in regard to his Attainments and Quality, had opportunity of inspecting the Records, and did peruse them accordingly. And *Hegesippus*, another ancient Writer, delivers the same Account, neither of whom could ever be gainsaid by the *Gentiles* in the Point. Tertul. *Apol.* Hegesl. 1. Euseb. *Hist. l.* 4. *c.* 21.

But neither was this Opinion of *Jesus* rising from the dead, entertained by *Gentiles* only: For several *Jews* of great Learning and Authority then alive, believ'd it likewise, though they had not the Grace to become *Christians* upon it. This is evident from the Story of *Josephus*, written not above forty Years after our Lord's Passion; who taking occasion to speak of *Jesus*, and his Disciples, after having mention'd his Crucifixion by *Pilate*, at the instance of the *Jews*; and that, notwithstanding all that ignominy and suffering, his Disciples did not cease to love and honour him still; adds, That as a Reward of their constant Affection, he returned to Life the third day, and appeared to them again. Which words are so delivered, as not to speak the Historian's Sense, so much as the common acknowledged Opinion of all sober Persons at that time. For there were then many *Christians* yet living, who had seen and spoken with *Jesus*, after his Resurrection; and infinite *Jews*, who from their Kindred and Friends, that had been Eye-witnesses, must needs have heard an Account of it.

I know not whether after such Evidence of our Lord's Resurrection, it be necessary to add any thing more: For they who believe, that *Jesus*, when dead, was able to raise himself to Life again, cannot in reason make any difficulty in believing Him able to as-

Luke xxiv. Acts i.

cend into Heaven. But of this too St. *Luke* mentions an hundred and twenty Witneſſes; who, forty days after his Reſurrection, ſaw him bodily aſcend thither from the top of Mount *Olivet*; and beſides this, a Viſion of Angels; and to take off all ſcruple, he names the Place and Day, when and where it happened. He ſets down the very words ſpoken by *Jeſus* at his Aſcenſion. He tells the manner of it, and how a Cloud receiv'd him out of their ſight. He declares what the Company did, whither they went, and where they remained, after their departure from thence. In ſhort, he is ſo particular in all the Circumſtances, that it had been the eaſieſt thing in the World, for the Enemies of our Religion to have diſproved and expoſed him, if any of thoſe Circumſtances had not been true. And it concerned him to be punctual, becauſe he had to deal with Men ſpiteful and vigilant; and the Falſhood, if any ſuch had been detected, muſt have fallen heavy upon him, and thoſe of the ſame Profeſſion with him.

To conclude this Head then, ſo far as concerns the Birth, and Life, and Doctrine, and Miracles, and Death, and Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*: Since nothing of all theſe came to paſs, which was not foretold by GOD's Prophets long before; nor any thing was ſignify'd before, concerning the *Meſſias*, which was not moſt punctually accompliſhed in and by *Jeſus*, during his abode upon Earth: We may moſt certainly aſſure ourſelves that, as GOD can neither foretel nor atteſt any Falſhood, ſo theſe things which appear to have been ſo evidently predicted and fulfilled, are demonſtrative Proofs, That our *Jeſus* was the true *Meſſias*. It remains now only to ſhew this yet more fully, by the Conſideration of ſome Events whereby he declared his Almighty Power and Truth after his Aſcent into Heaven. And this ſhall be the Subject of our next Section.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

How Jeſus *proved his Deity after his Return to Heaven.*

THIS Head is capable of being branched out into almoſt infinite particulars. For, who indeed can recount the many wonderful inſtances, by which our Lord, exalted to the Throne of his Father, hath evidenced himſelf to the World? But for order and brevity's ſake, I ſhall confine my ſelf to thoſe only, wherein his Love and Care for his Church, the Accompliſhment of his Promiſes, and the Juſtification of what he taught and foretold, while upon Earth, are more immediately concern'd.

Here then I ſhall conſider, (1.) The Protection and Increaſe of that little Flock *Chriſt* left in the World. (2.) The Actions of the Apoſtles. (3.) The Evangeliſts and their Writings. (4.) The Martyrs and their Sufferings for the Truth. (5.) The Conqueſt of the Devil and his Kingdom. (6.) The juſt and exemplary Vengeance executed upon the Enemies of *Chriſt*. And (7.) The fulfilling all thoſe Prophecies delivered by him, while here upon Earth.

1. For the *Firſt* of theſe, We may remember, how very ſmall the beginnings of this Church were, at our Lord's Aſcenſion. St. *Luke* deſcribes them returning from Mount *Olivet* back to *Jeruſalem*, continuing in prayer together, and in expectation how God would deal with them; The City and People bent againſt them; The Name of *Jeſus* odious and deſpiſed; No Subſtance of their own to ſupport them, nor any powerful Friends to aſſiſt and countenance them. But while this poor and feeble handful of People were thus divided between fears and hopes, and in likelihood of falling under extreme diſtreſs; behold on the tenth day, *Jeſus* performed his promiſe of ſending the Comforter, the Holy Ghoſt. By whom, beſides the inward joy and Acts i.

incredible ſatisfaction of mind which they felt in be-
Acts ii. lieving, they were inſpired with courage to expoſe themſelves, and preach publickly to the World: They received the Gift of Tongues, enabling them to converſe with People of all Nations; Wiſdom and wonderful Illumination in the ſublimeſt Myſteries; Skill to teach the Ignorant, and convince their Adverſaries; the Gift of Prophecy to ſee and foretel things to come; The Power of working Miracles in confirmation of the Truth; And as a taſte and pledge of their future ſucceſs, they ſaw three thouſand converted, by a Sermon of St. *Peter*'s, that very day. This increaſe came on ſo faſt, that in for-
Sueton. *in Ter.* Tacit. *Hiſt.* 5. ty years the Heathens themſelves confeſs all parts of the World to have been full of Chriſtians. And not long after *Tertullian* declares, that they had vaſt multitudes of Proſelytes in all Cities and Countries, in all Conditions and Degrees of Men: That, would their Religion diſpenſe with the Duties of their Civil Station, there was no need of making War upon their Perſecutors; for if they ſhould only ſtand ſtill and not aſſiſt them, the Empire could not ſupport it ſelf without them. So that we ſee how prodigiouſly this little Flock grew, in the compaſs of One Age, notwithſtanding all the violent and wicked means uſed to ſuppreſs and extinguiſh it. Which were ſo great, that all ſorts of Crimes put together were not treated with ſo much rigor, as that ſingle offence (for ſuch it was looked upon) of confeſſing *Chriſt*, and his Religion. And yet there was no concurrence of human means to promote this Increaſe, nothing to flatter mens natural Inclinations, no temporal Advantage to be gained by coming in. The Terms, upon which *Jeſus* invited
Acts ii. 38. men, were ſuch as theſe, *Repent and be baptized*;
John xvi. *In the World ye ſhall have tribulation*; *They ſhall*
Matt. x. *ſcourge and perſecute you*; *The Time cometh, that*
Luke xiv. *whoſoever killeth you ſhall think that he doth God ſervice. If a Man will be my Diſciple, let him hate*

Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, yea and his own Life, and take up his Croſs, and follow me. *Jeſus* profeſſes, that the Event of his coming ſhould be not to *bring Peace* and Eaſe, but Fire, and Sword, and Conflicts, and Enmity between neareſt Relations. And yet, with theſe diſcouraging Offers, by this Doctrine ſo croſs to our natural Appetites, by poor and in themſelves contemptible Officers, did *Jeſus* in a few years gain more hearts, than ever the moſt powerful Monarch did by all the temporal Allurements to his ſervice poſſible to be propoſed. All which evidently ſhews, that the Means of eſtabliſhing this Kingdom were ſupernatural, and that his power could not be leſs than divine, who contrary to all reaſon of Man, in ſo ſhort a time gained ſo miraculous, ſo univerſal a Conqueſt.

2. The next Conſideration, relating to the Apoſtles, is in ſome reſpect more wonderful than the former: That theſe few, mean, poor, illiterate Men ſhould be aſſigned to ſo great a work, as the Converſion of all Nations, and make their party good againſt the Power, and Learning, and Malice of the whole World; That they ſhould not only contend with ſuch Enemies ſucceſsfully, but direct and manage the affairs of their Maſter's Kingdom with ſuch wonderful Addreſs; That from ſuch inſufficiency and ſlowneſs of underſtanding and improvement, as they plainly betrayed by the Queſtions put to *Jeſus* juſt before his Aſcent into Heaven, the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt ſhould all on the ſudden qualify them for the higheſt Myſteries and moſt difficult Undertakings, which a Converſation of three Years, and the long repeated Inſtructions of their Maſter had left them ſo incapable of; That they ſhould ſubdue the Great without Power, and confute the moſt exquiſite Philoſophers without Learning or Study; That they ſhould do Miracles, not only to the wonder, but even the terror of the Beholders; Examples

ples whereof we have infinite in the Book of *Acts*, and such as, had they been forgeries, must needs have been soon detected, and would have effectually discredited them and their Religion for ever. It is therefore observable, that none of their Enemies ever went about to deny the matter of fact; but only had recourse to that old shift of imputing them to the power of Magick. This was the pretence of *Julian* and others: But they who have studied that Art most carefully, have been most free in declaring the extreme vanity of it. And *Julian* at last, awakened by Calamities, was forced to cry out, *Vicisti, Galilæe.* Acknowledging the truth of *Christ*'s Miracles and his followers, and the folly of his own fruitless opposition against him and his Religion.

Plin. *Hist. Nat. l.* 30. *c.* 1. Zosim. *in Juli.* Niceph. l. 10. c. 35.

Thus proceeded the Apostles, *Preaching every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.* This testimony and assistance gave them boldness, so that no terror or threats, no danger or persecution could stop their course. St. *Paul*'s profession was true of them all, that *neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, could separate them from the love and service of their Master, but in all these things they were more than Conquerors.* Nor did this Disposition forsake them at the time of their Deaths, which they met in the most terrible shape, with incredible Chearfulness; rejoycing to seal their Doctrine with their Blood: Never so full of Confidence, Courage, and Consolation, as at that hour: Never so joyfully owning their Lord, and discoursing of Rewards and Crowns, as at the last instant of their Combat. All which manifestly proves the actions of these Men not to have proceeded from a human Spirit, but to have been inspired and perform'd by the divine force and wonderful assistance of that Lord and God, whom they most truly confessed and preached.

Mark xvi.

Rom. viii.

3. Let us, in the *Third* place, observe the Evangelists,

gelists, who have left us an account of our Lord's Doctrine and Actions. And here it is worth our remark how different a method of delivering his Laws and Precepts our Lord took, from the generality of Law-makers. They procure them authority by publishing their own Laws, and promulgating them in their Life-time; so did *Lycurgus*, and *Solon*, and *Numa*, and *Mahomet*, and many others. But JESUS passed out of the World silently, without pomp or ostentation; he left nothing written by himself, but exerted his divine power in directing the pen of his Evangelists. Two of these were Apostles, and wrote what themselves had seen: The other two Disciples, who set down what they received from the Apostles. One of the Gospels was written in the *Hebrew* tongue, to perpetuate the Actions of *Jesus* in the Countrey where they were done: The other Three in the *Greek* Language, then generally used and understood; to spread the Knowledge of them throughout the World. The Writers composed them in different Countries, far distant from each other, and yet all agree in the substance of their Narratives: They wrote at different times, and yet the latter does not reprove or correct any thing in the former. They published these Accounts, while many were yet alive, who knew the facts: And many more, who desired to disprove and stifle them. They are so particular as to set down the very time, and day, and hour, the place, the Village, the house, the Names of the Persons concerned: And the more of these Circumstances, the easier were the Confutation, if they had not been true. They published their writings in their own Life-time, and preached the same things that they wrote. They were received after due examination, and especially upon the approbation of the Apostles: They did not, like other Authors, add or alter in any following Editions; nor correct any one passage put out at first: And they gave

these

theſe Writings ſuch Authority, as no Prince could ever yet obtain for the credit of his ſanctions; which was, to lay their lives down in Juſtification of what they had written.

Their manner of writing is plain and ſincere, without art or ornament; They flatter none, not even *Jeſus* himſelf: But at the ſame time they confeſs him to be God, they publiſh his Infirmities as Man; his hunger and thirſt, his wearineſs and ſleep, his weeping and his fear, his agonies and amazing heavineſs of Soul. They diſſemble not the defects even of the chiefeſt Apoſtles, though ſuch as might ſeem to diſcredit and bear hard upon them. They tell the frequent rebukes of *Chriſt*, their own dulneſs of underſtanding, the very impertinent queſtions they aſked him: the incredulity of *Thomas*, the ambition of *James* and *John*, the envy and emulation of them all. And which is ſtill a farther proof of their Sincerity, they leaſt of all ſpare themſelves, or their more particular friends. St. *Matthew* is only by himſelf ſtyled *Matthew the Publican*. St. *Mark*, who attended St. *Peter*, and is thought to have written, as He dictated to him, is more full than any of the reſt, in deſcribing that Apoſtle's denial of *Jeſus*, and more reſerved than any in the account of his Repentance. St. *Luke* who was companion to St. *Paul* hath recorded the difference between him and *Barnabas*, and his conſent and concurrence to the murther of St. *Stephen*. So that we may plainly ſee, they were Men of honeſt Principles, who, as they durſt not deviſe any thing of their own heads; ſo they made a Conſcience of concealing any part of the truth, in favour of themſelves, or of any other Perſon whatſoever.

Matt. x.

Theſe Writings were publiſhed and received for undoubted truth, by all that lived in the ſame Age, and were acquainted with the particulars related in them. Copies of them innumerable were diſperſed, and preſerved in infinite hands, with all the care and

nd reverence due to the word of God. They vere read in the publick Aſſemblies of all Coun-ries, expounded and taught by all Paſtors, com-nented upon by Holy Fathers from time to time. So that we may reſt ſecure, that theſe Writings ave ſuffered no material Corruption; ſince ſo ma-y Copies could not poſſibly be depraved without ppoſition and diſcovery: And our Bibles at this day ive us the ſame Sentences and Texts of Scripture, s the Fathers who then quoted them in their wri-ngs, had them in the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church. So that of this we may have no more round to doubt, than whether *Rome* or *Jeruſalem* r any other City famous in Story, and well known t this day, be the ſame place now, which Authors reated of under the ſame Name heretofore.

4. For the Credit and Confirmation of theſe Evan-geliſts and their Writings, God ſo ordered the matter, hat infinite Perſons (who are upon that account alled Martyrs) ſhould teſtify to the truth of the Goſpel with their Blood: A Teſtimony, which no ther Religion could ever boaſt of, except, that ome few *Jews* about the *Maccabees* time were inju-iouſly put to Death (when God for the Sins of hat Nation gave them up to Tyrants.) But for the umbers there is no compariſon, there being more Chriſtians put to Death for their belief in two Months, than were of the *Jews* in two thouſand Years before *Chriſt*'s coming. Which yet muſt needs ſeem ſtrange, if we reflect, that the *Jewiſh* Religion was every whit as oppoſite to the *Pagan*, as the Doctrines of the Chriſtian are. But thus our Maſter's words were fulfilled, *I come not to bring Peace, but a Sword.* And, *Behold I ſend you forth as Sheep among Wolves*; to be worried and torn in pieces without provocation, without mercy. Now in theſe almoſt incredible ſufferings of the Primitive Chriſtians, it is wonderful to obſerve, what infinite multitudes of each Sex, of all ages,

and

and degrees, and conditions, ſuffered daily for the Truth's ſake! What inſupportable and unuſual Torments, ſuch as were never heard or thought of before, the wicked Malice and Tyranny of their Enemies invented for the tryal of their Conſtancy and Patience. And yet what invincible Courage, and unſpeakable Alacrity, the Chriſtians expreſſed in bearing theſe Afflictions! Such as their very Enemies could not forbear aſcribing to ſome Divine Power and Supernatural Aſſiſtance.

'Tis true, we cannot with any good conſequence draw any general Concluſion from the Extremity of the Suffering, to the Goodneſs of the Cauſe. But, though ill Men may endure as well as good, yet they do not behave themſelves under it alike. For, as *Tertullian* argues, "Every evil Action is naturally attended with fear or ſhame. The Maleſactors, who love to commit Evil, are deſirous to conceal that Inclination. They tremble when taken; they deny all, when accuſed; and ſcarce can be racked into a Confeſſion. They lament their hard fate when condemned, and curſe their ill Stars for ſuch an unfortunate end. But what does the Chriſtian do? Is any of them aſhamed? Or does he repent, when apprehended, except for not being apprehended ſooner? If he be charged as a Chriſtian, he glories in the Charge; if this be his Accuſation, he is not ſolicitous to ſhift it off; if he be aſked the Queſtion, he readily owns the thing; if he be condemned, he thanks God for it. What new ſort of Evil is this, that hath none of the natural Conſequences of Evil; no fear, no ſhame, no evaſion, or repentance; no ſorrow or murmuring, or complaint? What Evil (ſays he) can this be, where Guilt is matter of joy, where Accuſation is an honour, and Puniſhment is eſteem'd the greateſt happineſs?" This is *Tertullian*'s reaſoning upon the caſe; and certainly nothing can be a clearer Proof of the Omnipotence of *Jeſus*, than

Apolog.

that

at impregnable Fortitude, which above all the rce of human Nature and Reaſon, he inſpired to ſuch numbers of Martyrs for the Truth.

5. I come now to obſerve the Demonſtrations of *Jeſus* his divine Power, upon the Kingdom of Darkeſs and wicked Spirits: Which ſufficiently appears, from the anſwers of Oracles after *Chriſt*'s irth, conveyed to Poſterity by Heathen Writers emſelves. *Euſebius* hath produced many in his xth Book, *De Præparatione Evangelica*; eſpecially om *Porphyry*, who introduces *Apollo* crying out, hat *the Honour and Wiſdom of his Oracles had now uite forſaken him.* So fully were thoſe Prophecies ade good in *Jeſus*, of bringing all the Idols to onfuſion. The wicked Spirits owned this Power his, while he was yet upon Earth; Confeſſing im to be the Son and Holy one of God; and begging, that when he diſpoſſeſs'd the *Dæmoniacks*, Mark v. ey might not be tormented, nor ſent back into ell, but ſuffered to wander in Mountains, and go to herds of Swine. And theſe acknowledgments ey made publickly, and, by what happened afterards, ſhewed, that they were diſpoſed of at his leaſure. This appeared yet farther after *Jeſus* his eath; For, upon the Publication of his Goſpel roughout the World, the Oracles, which before ere frequent in moſt Countries, were univerſally ut to Silence. Of this we need no Evidence but e Confeſſions of the Heathen themſelves; *Lucan*, Juven. *Juvenal*, *Strabo*, and *Plutarch*, own the fact. And *Sat.* 6. e laſt labours hard to aſſign reaſons for it. But Strab. l. 9. e two chief fixed upon by him are manifeſtly inſuf- Plut. *de Perf. Orac.* cient. For when he aſcribes it to the increaſe of Wiſdom in the World, which rendred ſuch Anſwers f the Gods not any longer neceſſary; he contradicts imſelf, and thoſe Examples of the Ancients, which e declar'd in his *Lives* not parallel'd by any in afer ages: And when he imputes it to thoſe Spirits waxing feeble or dying with length of time; he for-

gets, that immaterial Subſtances cannot grow infirm, or old, neither can they die. So that we are ſtill to ſeek for ſome other Cauſe, and ſhall find none ſo ſatisfactory, as that aſſigned by St. *John*, *For this cauſe the Son of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the Devil.* And, among thoſe works, none were of more pernicious conſequence than the Idolatrous Superſtitions and vain Deluſions of Oracles, the ſeeking to them as Gods, and depending upon them for future Contingencies.

1 John iii. 8.

This Power over the infernal Kingdom and its Miniſters was not confined to the ſingle Perſon of *Jeſus* himſelf, but by him communicated to his Servants and Followers. Thus it was to the Twelve, and to the Seventy in his Life-time; and after his Death, the Commiſſion was greatly inlarged. Inſomuch that *Tertullian* makes a bold Challenge to the Heathen Magiſtrates and Perſecutors of his time, and offers to put his own and Fellow-Chriſtians Lives upon that Iſſue, "That he or they could controul thoſe Spirits, whom the *Romans* worſhipped as Gods; that he would force them and their Prieſts, before any Heathen Tribunal, to confeſs themſelves Devils, and acknowledge *Chriſt* to be the Wiſdom and Power of God; that he is in Heaven and ſhall return to judge the World; that they are in Dread of that horrible Judgment for their Wickedneſs; that they fear God in *Chriſt* and *Chriſt* in God, and are, ſore againſt their wills, made ſubject to his Servants." This proffer made to the Perſecutors then in *Rome*, we may be very confident would have been accepted, had not the Enemy of Truth been ſenſible, that the Experiment was dangerous, and would turn to his great confuſion. Nor did the Word and Command only, but even the bare Preſence of Chriſtians put a terror into thoſe Spirits of Darkneſs. *Lactantius* ſays that upon a poor Chriſtian Servant attending his Maſter to a Heathen Temple, the Idols cry'd out

Mat. x. Luke x. *Apolog.*

Inſtit. l. 4. c. 19. Præp. Evang. l. 5. Porph. l. 1. con. Chriſt. Euſeb. ubi ſupra.

at nothing could be done, ſo long as that Chri-
ian was by. *Euſebius* relates a like anſwer from
pollo to *Dioclesian*. And *Porphyry* ſays of the
lague of *Meſſina*, *That Æſculapius and all the other*
ods were departed from that City, *upon the coming in*
the Chriſtians. For ſince Men began to worſhip Je-
s, *there was no good to be had from their Gods.*
nd though this was intended as a malicious in-
uation, to render the Chriſtians odious, and ex-
ſe them to the fury of their Enemies; yet the
onfeſſion is very remarkable; and gives us the
ue Cauſe of the utter overthrow of Oracles
roughout the whole Earth.

6. My next Proof of this Divine Power and Ju-
ce concerns the ſevere and memorable vengeance
ecuted upon the Enemies of *Jeſus* and his Religion.
nd here I might inſtance in the dreadful Calamities
d wretched deaths of *Herod* the Great; of his Son
rchelaus; of *Herod Antipas*, the murtherer of St.
hn Baptiſt, and derider of our Lord at his Paſſion; Mat. ii. 16, 22.
that other *Herod* who ſlew St. *James* and impri- Luke xxiii.
ned St. *Peter*; of *Pontius Pilate*, who condemn'd Acts xii.
ſus to be crucify'd; of *Caligula*, and *Nero*, and
e many other *Roman* Emperors, who were as vi-
ly diſtinguiſhed by their miſerable Afflictions, as
ey had diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their implaca-
e Hatred, and Perſecution of the Chriſtians. I
ght alſo obſerve, that few or no ſuch Examples
cur in Hiſtory, ſince the Empire became Chri-
an under *Conſtantine*, except *Julian* the Apoſtate,
lens the *Arian*, and ſome others notorious and de-
ſtable for their wickedneſs. But I content myſelf
th one eminent inſtance of Juſtice upon a whole
ation, the moſt obſervable of any that ever hap-
ned in the World: That, I mean, upon *Jeruſalem*,
d the *Jewiſh* People, for their obſtinacy and barba-
y to *Jeſus*, at his Death and Paſſion.

Joſephus, and *Philo*, and other Hiſtorians, who
ere either contemporary with, or lived immediate-

Joseph. *Antiq.* *l* 19. *c.* 2. *De Bell.* *Jud. l.* 2. & 3. Phil. *in* *Flac.* & *Leg.* Corn. Tac.

ly after our Lord, declare the Calamities inflicted upon that People to be past all Power of Expression. What they suffered by *Pilate* under *Tiberius*, by *Petronius* under *Caligula*; by *Cumanus* under *Claudius*; by *Festus* and *Albinus* under *Nero*; and, when these Cruelties had moved them to rebel against the *Romans*, by their utter ruin and extirpation under *Vespasian* and *Titus*: *Josephus*, an Eye-witness of their miseries, tells us of eleven hundred thousand slain; fourscore and seventeen thousand taken alive, and either put to death afterwards in publick triumphs, or set openly to sale for slaves, to be scattered all over the World. In this universal Calamity it is observable, that, at the same time and place in which they had put *Jesus* to death, that is, in *Jerusalem*, and at their Feast of the Passover, when their whole Nation was assembled from all parts of the Country, they received this subversion from that very *Roman* Power, to which by common Cry they had appealed from *Jesus* before. As they had apprehended *Jesus*, who entred to his Passion from the Mount of *Olives*, so *Titus* upon the same Mount first opened his Siege against the City: As they dragged *Jesus* from *Caiaphas* to *Pilate*, so were they now haled from *John* to *Simon*, the heads of two contending Factions, and scourged and tormented before their Tribunals: As they had caused *Jesus* to be derided and buffeted, and villanously abused by the Soldiers; so were their Nobles and Principal Rulers scornfully used, scourged, and crucified, by *Roman* Soldiers: Which last Indignity of Crucifixion was never practised upon the *Jews* of Condition, before the death of *Jesus*. But in this War *Josephus* acquaints us, that five hundred of his Nation were put to this opprobious Punishment at once: So that there was neither room left for Crosses, nor Crosses for the Bodies. This dreadful misery fell upon the *Jews*, about forty years after our Lord's Ascension, when they had given unpardonable

De Bel. *Jud. l.* 6. & 12.

Proof

Proofs of an obdurate and perverſe Spirit; when they had ſlain St. *Stephen* and St. *James*, and baniſhed St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, and Others who in vain laboured to convert them. And yet ſo Providence ordered it, that the Chriſtians who lived at *Jeruſalem* had retired a little before the Siege, to *Pella*, and ſo eſcaped the common Deſtruction, which overtook that City and its Inhabitants. The account of the *Jewiſh* War in *Joſephus* ſhews how their affairs declined, and grew every Day more deplorable. When the War was at an end, *Titus* ſent a Preſent of ſixteen thouſand *Jews* to his Father, to be put to Death at *Rome*, by ſundry kinds of Torments. Others he diverted his *Romans* with; and *Joſephus* ſaw two thouſand five hundred in one Day murthered in combat with one another, and devoured by wild Beaſts at the Emperor's appointment: Others in *Antioch* and other great Cities were made Fuel for their Fires of Triumph; Others were ſold to Slavery, Others condemned to the Mines and Quarries for their Lives. After this under *Trajan*, *Marcus Turbo* in *Africa*, and *Lucius Quintus* in the Eaſt, ſlew ſo many *Jews*, that all Hiſtories agree, the multitude of the ſlain cannot be expreſs'd. After that, under *Adrian*, *Julius Severus* was ſent to extinguiſh the remains of that wretched People, who deſtroyed nine hundred and eighty Towns and Villages, and ſlew five hundred and fourſcore thouſand of that race in one Day: He beat down the City of *Jeruſalem*, ſo that of all their ancient Buildings, there was not one Stone left upon another: He rebuilt part of it again, and cauſed it to be inhabited by *Gentiles* only: He changed the Name to *Ælia*, in honour of the Emperor, drove all that Progeny out, with a ſevere injunction never to return, or ſo much as look back to their Country again. And thus was that dreadful Imprecation accompliſhed to the uttermoſt, which the *Jews* had ſo ſolemnly bound upon themſelves and their Poſterity, when *Jeſus* ſtood

Mat. xxvii. 25. before *Pilate*'s Judgment-ſeat, crying out with one voice, *His blood be on us and on our Children.*

7. This notorious and exemplary Puniſhment, or rather Caſting off, of the *Jewiſh* People, which before was God's Peculiar, is an eminent proof of my laſt Conſideration: The fulfilling our Lord's Words and Prophecies. It being foretold in moſt expreſs and awakening terms, That all the innocent Blood of God's Servants, ſhed in former Ages, ſhould be required at *the Hands of that Generation*; That *their houſe ſhould be left deſolate*; That of their ſumptuous Buildings, there ſhould not one *Stone be left upon another*; That the Days were coming, when their *Enemies ſhould come upon* Jeruſalem, *and caſt a trench about her, and compaſs it round, and keep it in on every ſide, and caſt it down to the Ground:* The Signs and particular Seaſon whereof he gives his Diſciples warning of, *When you ſhall ſee* Jeruſalem *compaſſed with Armies, then know, that the deſolation thereof is nigh. For theſe are the days of Vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. They ſhall fall by the edge of the Sword, and ſhall be led away captive into all Nations: For there ſhall be great diſtreſs in the land, and wrath upon this People: And* Jeruſalem *ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* Now theſe Predictions were delivered at a time, when the *Jews* ſeem'd moſt ſecure, and were in perfect Amity with the *Romans:* As they likewiſe continued, when the Evangeliſts committed them to writing. They never had leſs cauſe to ſuſpect ſo dreadful a Change: And yet the certain foreſight our Lord had of it was not only juſtified abundantly by the Event, but ſignified by thoſe Tears of Pity, which he ſhed over that City, and the warning given to her Daughters from the Croſs, not to *weep for him, but for their Children*, in regard of the miſeries which ſhould ſoon after befal them. And it is obſervable, that about a hundred years after, *Phlegon* a cele-

Mat. xxiii.

Mat. xxiv. Luke xix.

Luke xxi. 20, &c.

Luke xxiii. 28. Phleg. Trall. l. *Annal.* *See* Orig. *contra* Celſ. l. 2.

celebrated Chronologer, and Servant to *Adrian* the Emperor, obſerving the very punctual accompliſhment of theſe Prophecies, declared, that never any man foretold future Events, with ſo great certainty and exactneſs as *Jeſus* had done. Which obſervation, though reſtrained by that Author to the ſingle caſe of the *Jews*, (a ſufficient demonſtration, though we could produce no other, of our Lord's Preſcience and divine Spirit,) yet it is confirmed to Us Chriſtians by many other Inſtances, which it is not poſſible for human Learning, or prudent Conjecture, or any thing leſs than God, to have had any inſight into. Such are the foretelling his own Death, with the Time, Manner, and all the Circumſtances of it; the fears and flight of his Diſciples, though they ſo ſolemnly reſolved and proteſted the contrary; the three denials of St. *Peter*; the Treachery and Impenitence of *Judas*; the Time of his Reſurrection; the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt; and many other Predictions not yet fulfilled, even then, when the Diſciples publiſhed them to the World. And which, if not preciſely agreeable in their Events, had been the greateſt and moſt irreparable damage poſſible for the Credit of thoſe Writers, and the common Cauſe of Chriſtianity, ever to have ſuſtained.

But I may expect, That Infidels will object againſt the Authority of theſe Evangeliſts, and pretend theſe Matters forg'd, or poſt-dated to their Events: And therefore I ſhall deſire ſuch to conſider ſome others predicted expreſly, not only when they had not, but when there was not the leaſt human appearance that ever they ſhould have taken effect. And what can theſe Men alledge in Bar to that Prophecy of the kind and manner of St. *Peter*'s Death? or that of St. *John*, dying in a manner different from the reſt of the Apoſtles, and ſurviving that coming of our Lord, to deſtroy the *Jewiſh* Nation? or that of the cruel Perſecutions, which his Diſciples ſhould afterwards undergo for his Re-

ligion; and that too from the *Romans*, who then quietly permitted the Exercise of any kind of Religion? or lastly, that of the Constancy of his Followers, and the amazing Increase and Success of the Gospel, notwithstanding the unspeakable hardships and afflictions, by which Men laboured to discourage and suppress it? These are Facts not to be deny'd; and so universal a Conquest gain'd by a suffering Persuasion, which had so little to recommend it to a corrupt World, and so many difficulties to vanquish, was, questionless, a Point so out of the compass of human Reason and Probability, that we cannot ascribe the foresight and fulfilling of it, to any other Cause, than the Wisdom and Power of God himself.

SECT. V.

The Conclusion.

AND now, from what hath been said in this Chapter, I ought not to doubt, but my Reader is satisfy'd in these three Points:

I. That from the beginning of the World there was a *Messiah* or Saviour promised; and that in some later Ages, though long before his actual Appearance, the Time, the Manner, the End, and the Circumstances of his Coming, the Quality of his Person, Doctrine, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascent into Heaven, were signify'd and predicted by the Prophets so plainly, that the fulfilling of these Prophecies might be a sufficient mark to distinguish the true *Messias* by.

II. Secondly, That these Particulars, so declar'd and foretold, were all most exactly fulfilled in the Person and Actions of our *Jesus*, while upon Earth.

III. Thirdly, That besides that Evidence during his Conversation here, he hath likewise left us many irre-

refragable Teſtimonies of his Divine Power, ſince is Departure into Heaven. So that every Chriſtian ay firmly and undoubtedly perſuade himſelf of the ruth of that Religion, which *Jeſus* taught and e-ablished in the World: There being ſuch Abſurdi-es, and inſuperable Difficulties conſequent upon enying this, that a fair and reaſonable Man would dmire there ſhould be ſuch a thing as an Unbe-ever left in the World. As for the purpoſe:

1. Is it even poſſible, That ſo many things ſhould e foretold, ſo particularly, ſo preciſely, in ſo ma-y Ages, and in different Places, by different Per-ons, but all in great veneration for Piety and Vir-ue; with ſo nice an Agreement in all, and yet ome, to human Reaſon, very unlikely Circum-ances; and this to be done by any, but the Spirit f that GOD, whoſe incommunicable Prerogative is only to ſee and know diſtinctly future Contin-encies, long before they are brought to paſs, or ſo uch as thought of, by thoſe who are the inſtru-ents of bringing them about?

2. Can any Man alive perſuade himſelf, that ſo any things ſo unaccountable and amazing, ſhould e in every point exactly fulfilled, in any other erſon except him only, of whom they were in-ended?

3. Will the Notions any Man hath of GOD ſuf-er him to ſuſpect, that GOD would have concur-ed with *Jeſus*, and aſſiſted him in things above the ower of Nature, and given him the Teſtimony of Teacher ſent from himſelf (as Miracles confeſſed-y are) if he had been a Deceiver, and taken upon im to publiſh a falſe Doctrine?

4. Admitting that *Jeſus* had intended to ſeduce Mankind, would he have taken ſo awkward a Me-hod, as that of impoſing Precepts hard and repug-nant to the general ſtrain of Fleſh and Blood? Would he not rather, like *Mahomet*, have drawn them in by Principles of Senſuality, and ſuited himſelf to the Taſte

Taſte and Inclinations of Men? Certainly, as he could not have propoſed, ſo the World could never have embraced ſo pure and ſo auſtere a *Syſtem* of Religion, without the Aſſiſtance of a ſupernatural and divine Power.

5. Could a Man by any Power leſs than this, a Man meanly Born and Educated, a Man ſent into the World, when Learning was in its moſt flouriſhing State: Could ſuch a one, I ſay, at ſuch a time, have been by any but a Divine Power, ſo exquiſitely knowing, as to excel all the Wiſdom of *Philoſophers*; to give more plain diſtinct Rules for living, than all the Sages that ever lived; to infuſe theſe ſo powerfully into the Minds of Poor Simple Men, that the moſt unlearned *Chriſtian* ſhould be able to ſay more of the Knowledge of GOD, of the Creation of the World, of the End of Man, of the Meaſures of Moral Good and Evil, of the Immortality of the Soul, of the Judgment to come, of the Rewards and Puniſhments of Virtue and Vice, than all the Sects and Schools, who for ſo many Ages had laboured in theſe Points, and valued themſelves upon attaining to higher Degrees of Learning in them, than common Men?

6. Had not *Jeſus* been ſincere, why ſhould he keep to ſo ſevere, ſo private a way of Living? Why ſhould he ſo induſtriouſly decline Advancement and Applauſe? Why did he offer himſelf to ſo opprobrious a Death? Why did he make choice of ſuch Poor and Deſpicable Perſons for his Apoſtles and Diſciples? And whence is it that Men, engag'd in the Affairs of the World, follow'd him in ſuch Multitudes, that they ſtuck to him with ſuch Zeal, and Conſtancy, and Perſeverance, even to Death? Cheats are never of long continuance, nor do Men raſhly quit all Temporal Advantages for the Service of One, who pretends not to make them any amends of this kind. And what Evidence can we have

ave of any Man's Sincerity, if theſe Conſiderations ill not put it paſt a doubt?

7. What account can an Infidel give of the aſtoiſhing Progreſs of the *Chriſtian Faith*; ſet on foot y plain unſkilful People, not cut out for Diſſimution, or Artifice, or Invention? They went gainſt the Stream of all Mankind: They perſevered Tortures and Afflictions inexpreſſible: They rought Miracles above the reach of any human ower: They overthrew Idolatry, and confound- all the Powers of Hell, by the ſingle Name of eir Maſter: They ſaw the Prophecies of *Jeſus* ful- led, the Puniſhment of their Enemies, the Conerſion of whole Provinces, and Kingdoms; and time the *Roman* Empire it ſelf became ſubject to e Law of a Crucified Saviour. This is ſo marellous, that we cannot ſure but acknowledge it to the Lord's Doing.

8. Laſtly, who can read ſo many expreſs Proecies of the Old Teſtament, declaring, that the *ews* ſhould abandon, perſecute, and barbarouſly urther, the true *Meſſiah*, at his coming: that for is Crime they ſhould themſelves be abandoned by OD, finally ruined, diſperſed all over the World, *Vithout a King, without a Prince, without a Sacri-* Hoſ. iii. 4. *e, without Altar, or Ephod?* And compare with eſe Denunciations of Vengeance, that which came pon that Nation, ſoon after the Death of *Jeſus*, e Slavery, and Baniſhment, and Reproach they ave continued in ever ſince; their forlorn Condion, with regard both to their Temporal and Spitual Affairs; and, in ſhort, that inexpreſſible vaiety of Miſeries they are ſunk into, without any roſpect of Recovery: Who, I ſay, can obſerve his, and not be convinced, That that *Jeſus*, whom ith wicked Hands they Crucified and Slew, is the ery *Meſſias*; and that it is his Blood, which lies heavy upon Them and Their Poſterity?

Since

Since then we have ſuch manifold, ſuch abundant Evidence, that our *Jeſus* is the only Saviour of Mankind, and conſequently, that His Religion is the true way of ſerving God acceptably, and to attain everlaſting Happineſs; I will intreat my Reader to conſider farther, That the ſame *Jeſus* foretold as a *Saviour*, was likewiſe by the ſame Prophets foretold as a *Judge:* And that both Teſtaments are very frequent and preſſing, in deſcribing the Majeſty, the Severity, the Terror of that Second Coming: The Niceneſs of the Account to be rendred of each Action, Word, and Thought: The Everlaſting Concern depending upon the Sentence of that Great Day; aud the mighty Importance, Uſefulneſs, Neceſſity of bearing this continually in Mind, that it may influence our Lives, and prevail with us to make due Preparation to meet our Lord at his Coming. For this very Perſon Himſelf hath forewarn'd us, That his more excellent Law, if not obey'd and diligently perform'd by us, ſhall add to the Number of our Stripes, and ſerve only to aggravate our Condemnation. If therefore my Reader receiv'd any Light and Satisfaction, in the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, by the foregoing Pages; I muſt exhort and conjure him, That, to the confirmation of his Judgment, he would add, the Amendment of his Life; that he will labour to attain the Benefits of the Goſpel, by becoming a Chriſtian indeed, and not reſting in the mere Name, and empty Profeſſion only. To which purpoſe, I ſhall, in the next Chapter, ſhew wherein the Duty of ſuch a one conſiſts; that ſo every one of us may be able to judge of his own Condition, and provide in time againſt the Doom reſerv'd for thoſe wretched People, who ſhall in vain cry, *Lord, Lord*; and be rejected with, *I know you not*; *Depart from me, all ye that work Iniquity.*

CHA

CHAP. V. SECT. I.

Of Faith *and* Good Works.

HAving formerly prov'd, That the End for which Man was created and plac'd in this World, is the ſerving of God, and thereby aining eternal Happineſs; I now proceed to ſhew, herein that Service conſiſts. Which to be ſhort, in believing the Doctrines, which *Jeſus* and his Diſciples have taught; and in obeying thoſe Rules nd Precepts, which they have left us, for the Go-ernment of our Lives. For in theſe two Points, he Sum of Chriſtianity is contain'd.

And *Firſt*, for our Belief: It is not to be ima-in'd, that the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God ſhould eave us deſtitute of ſufficient Inſtruction and clear Evidence, for all thoſe Articles which he hath made eceſſary to Salvation. The Privilege of *Chriſtians* n this reſpect, is foretold by the Prophet *Iſaiah*; Chap. xxxv. *An Highway ſhall be there, and it ſhall be called, The way of Holineſs; the wayfaring-men, though fools, ſhall not err therein:* Meaning, that the Doctrine of the *Meſſias* ſhould be ſo plain and intelligible, that Men of weak Capacities, (provided they apply'd themſelves to the Study of it with an Honeſt Mind) ſhould be able to diſcern their Duty. And hence St. *Paul* calls Hereticks *Self-condemned*; becauſe the ſwer- Tit. iii. vings of Men from the Truth proceed rather from Sin, or Neglect, wilful Error, or Inconſideration, Paſſion or Prejudice, than from any real Difficulty in thoſe Points wherein the Subſtance and Foundation of our Religion conſiſts. The Apoſtles of our Lord taught one Doctrine unanimouſly, throughout the ſeveral Churches where they preach'd: The main Articles of this Doctrine were form'd into ſhort Summaries, call'd *Creeds*: Thoſe *Creeds* every Perſon

at

at his *Baptiſm* was requir'd to declare his Aſſent to: They were collected out of Scripture, and impos'd nothing, which was not either expreſly contain'd there, or might not by manifeſt Conſequence be prov'd from thence. Thoſe Scriptures were written, diſperſed and approved as a full Declaration of the Will of God concerning us. The Body of *Chriſtians*, united by, and conſenting in, theſe Doctrines over the face of the whole Earth, were called the *Catholick Church*. When any wicked or perverſe Men advanced ſtrange Opinions, Appeal was conſtantly made to theſe Writings, as the Common Standard of Faith: All falſe Gloſſes, and forced Interpretations of theſe were rejected, and forbidden to be received: And Men were eſteemed Orthodox, or otherwiſe, as they agreed or diſagreed with this Rule. So that He, and He only, is to be reputed a true Believer, who ſticks cloſe to the Ancient, the Univerſal Church of *Chriſt*; and in that, to the clear and natural Senſe of the Word of God, even in thoſe things which his own Reaſon cannot diſtinctly comprehend. And they, who hold to this Rule, and ſubmit to this Authority of God and his Church, are in a Safe Condition, as to the firſt Point, which concerns the Faith of a *Chriſtian*.

SECT. II.

Of Good Works.

THE Second Branch of our Duty regards the Life and Manners of a *Chriſtian*; The Diſcharge whereof is more difficult than the former, in proportion as the Dangers and Temptations to it are more various. For the Generality of Errors and Hereſies have ever been obſerved to take their riſe, either from a proud or a factious Spirit. Pride diſpoſes Men to broach new Opinions, to affect Singu-

singularity, to wreſt and pervert, or even to que-
tion the Authority of Scripture; to contemn the
udgment of others, and think our ſelves wiſer than
ll Mankind; to ſet up our own Notions and Rea-
on for the meaſure of what we believe; to reject my-
erious truths, and throw off every thing which
oes not ſuit with our own Intereſts or Prejudices,
r weak Apprehenſions; to prefer the Arguings of
ur own Mind before the Revelations of the wiſe
nd great God, and to force his Word to deſcend
o our Capacities. Faction ſhakes off all Authority
f Superiors, as an inſupportable Yoke; kindles
Contention, arms People againſt their Lawful
Guides, and breaks Men into Parties, cuts in ſun-
er the Bonds of Unity and Peace, rebels againſt
God's Ordinances, and turns the Beauty of his
Church into Deformity and Confuſion.

But though theſe two be the Principal Cauſes of
Errors in Faith and Opinion, yet are not the Occa-
ons of vicious Practice to be brought within ſo nar-
ow a compaſs. Theſe are as various as we have
orrupt paſſions, and inordinate deſires; Each of
hich may, and often does, betray us to irregula-
ties in our Lives. And hence the Scripture levels
ſelf much more againſt Vice, and abounds more
ith exhortations to a holy Life, than in directions
or ſound Belief: Becauſe our frailty in this reſpect
s greater, and the temptations we have to encoun-
er more numerous. Hence our Saviour began his
Preaching with the Doctrine of Repentance; and in
hat Divine Sermon on the Mount, treats of Mo-
al Virtues; Humility, and Meekneſs, and Juſtice,
nd Purity, Patient Suffering, Forgiveneſs of Inju-
ies, Faſting, Prayer, Contempt of Riches, Content-
edneſs and Reſignation, Charity, Integrity, entring
n at the ſtrait Gate, and an exact Diligence in
fulfilling all God's Commands, and Living up to
what we have learned. He anſwers his Diſciples
with great Solemnity, that he came not to deſtroy,

but

but to perfect the Law; that They who break any of his Commandments, and by their Doctrine or Example encourage others in doing so, shall have no place in his Kingdom; He exhorts his Disciples to *shine as Lights in the World* by an exemplary conversation; and tells them, *Except their Righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* He tells them plainly that they cannot *serve two Masters*, and therefore, either *God* or *Mammon* must be abandoned; And concludes, that the only proof of a good Tree is yielding good fruit; which every Tree, that does not, though otherwise never so beautiful to the Eye, shall certainly be hewn down, and cast into the fire; and that, not every one who shall say unto him, Lord, Lord, shall be saved at the last day; but even such as had wrought Miracles in his Name, if they heard his sayings and did them not, shall reap no benefit by their Belief, or by any other Privileges, but shall be denyed and rejected by him in their utmost extremity.

This long Lecture of a virtuous Life is a plain Argument, that the owning of *Jesus* and his Doctrine will stand them in no stead, who are not careful to conform their lives to what he taught. For, though Faith be the Foundation, yet there goes a great deal more to the finishing this spiritual Building. The Principles of Christianity are soon learnt, but the practice of it is an Employment for our whole Lives. And, without This, we are but like a foundation without a superstructure, or a stock without branch or fruit; for so St. *James* hath told us expressly that all the Life of Religion lies in the Practice

James ii. 26. *As the Body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

This is a Point in which Men, partial to their Lusts, and willing to indulge them with some pretence of Reason, began very early to mistake: And therefore they contrived to find some colour

eir Liberties from ſeveral Paſſages of St. *Paul*, here he ſeems to ſet the Obedience of Faith in oppoſition to a Law of Works. Some of the Fathers ve been of opinion, that not only St. *James*, but me other of the Apoſtles, who wrote after St. *aul*, had the clearing this difficulty particularly in ew. I will here preſent the Reader with a paſſage t of St. *Auguſtine* at large, to this purpoſe, beuſe it makes very fully for the matter now in hand.

A wicked Opinion having ſprung up, even in the Apoſtles days, by miſunderſtanding St. *Paul's* Argument, St. *Peter*, St. *John*, St. *James*, and St. *Jude*, aimed in their Epiſtles principally at this end, to vindicate the Doctrine of St. *Paul* from the falſe conſequences charged upon it, and to ſhew, that *Faith without good works is nothing worth*. And indeed, St. *Paul* doth not ſpeak of Faith at large, but only of that lively, fruitful, and Evangelical *Faith, which* (as himſelf ſaith) *worketh by Love*. As for that Faith, void of Works, which theſe Men think ſufficient to Salvation, he declares poſitively againſt it, that though he had ſuch in the higheſt degree, even to work Miracles, *and remove mountains, yet if he had not Charity it would profit him nothing*. And what he means by *Charity* is plain, when he calls it in other places, *a new Creature*, and the *fulfilling of the Law*. Hence St. *Peter* in his ſecond Epiſtle, after exhorting Men, *to add to their Faith Virtue*, &c. takes notice, how ſome Paſſages of his Brother *Paul* had been *wreſted by unlearned and unſtable Men to their own Deſtruction*. And he calls it *wreſting*, becauſe St. *Paul* was in truth of the ſame opinion with the other Apoſtles, and held Life eternal impoſſible to be obtained by any Faith, which had not the atteſtation of a virtuous Life. Nay, St. *James* compares this to the Devils themſelves; *Doſt thou believe there is one God? thou doſt well, the Devils alſo believe and tremble*. What could be ſaid more truly,

Auguſt. *de fide & oper. c.* 14.

Gal. v.

1 Cor. xiii.

Gal. vi.

Rom. xiii.

2 Pet. 1.

Ch. iii.

" more ſmartly than this? For thus indeed it was.
" The Devils confeſs *Chriſt* to be the Son of God,
" and thus far agreed with St. *Peter*; yet *Chriſt* com-
" mended the one, and rebuked the other. Let
" not then ignorant Minds be deceived with a vain
" Opinion of knowing God, if they confeſs him
" only with a dead Faith. They read perhaps
John xvii. 3. " *This is life Eternal to know thee, the true God, and*
" *Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent:* But then they
" muſt remember, how the ſame Evangeliſt ex-
1 John ii. 3, 4. " plains that knowledge, when he ſays, *By this we*
" *know that we know God, if we keep his Command-*
" *ments. He that ſaith I know God, and keepeth*
" *not his Commandments, the ſame is a Liar, and the*
" *Truth is not in him.*" With ſuch as theſe it is
that our Lord expoſtulates, *Why call ye me Lord,*
Lord, but do not the things which I ſay? And again,
If ye know theſe things happy are ye if ye do them.
Of ſuch he complains among the *Jews*; *This People*
honoureth me with their Lips, but their Heart is far
from me.

I will conclude this Argument with St. *Chry-*
ſoſtom's reflection upon the Perſon caſt into utter
darkneſs for want of the Wedding Garment; who
he looks upon as an Emblem of all wicked Pro-
feſſors of Chriſtianity: Admitted into the Feaſt
by virtue of his Faith and Knowledge, as they are
Baptized and viſible Members of *Chriſt*'s Church;
but ſhut out becauſe not adorned with good works,
as they ſhall one day be, who caſt a blemiſh upon
a Holy Faith, by a Scandalous and Ungodly Life.
" He was invited to the Feaſt, and brought to the
" Table, (ſays he) but becauſe the foulneſs of his
" Garment diſhonoured the Maſter of the Feaſt,
" obſerve how lamentably his expectations were
" diſappointed; how grievous a puniſhment he was
" doomed to. He was not only thruſt from the
" Table, and not ſuffered to Eat of the Marriage
" Supper, but was alſo bound hand and foot, and
" c

caſt into utter darkneſs, a place of weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth. Let us not then, I beſeech you, let us not deceive our ſelves, by imagining that Faith will ſave us without Works. For except we joyn Purity of heart and life with our belief; and in this holy Vocation of ours, deck and adorn our ſelves with the beautiful Garments of virtuous Deeds, which may ſecure us an admittance at the Marriage Feaſt in Heaven; nothing ſhall be able to deliver us from partaking in the miſery and condemnation of this wretched Man. This is well obſerv'd by St. *Paul*, who after having ſaid, *We have an houſe not made with hands,* 2 Cor. v. *eternal in the heavens*, does not forget preſently to add this limitation, *If ſo be that being cloathed, we be not found naked.*" Thus far he.

It were eaſy to produce many other Authorities this effect; but Theſe, and the plain Words of ipture, and the Reaſon of every ſober Man, are icient to ſhew the neceſſity of a holy Life, in or- to our future happineſs. And no Man now can at a loſs to know wherein the true Service of a iſtian conſiſts. So that each Reader, by the of this little already ſaid, is abundantly quali- to take a view of himſelf, and to make a right gment of the Condition of his own Soul: How may expect to come off in the laſt great Day of unt; what profit he may hope to reap, or what age he may fear to ſuſtain, by his knowledge profeſſion of *Chriſt* and his Goſpel. To him walketh uprightly, his Conſcience may ſpeak ce; and God who cannot lye hath promiſed etneſs and Aſſurance of Peace for ever; Rewards timable, and infinite: To him that departs from right way of true Faith and a good Life, Pains Puniſhments no leſs unconceivable are re- ed. So that every Chriſtian, who is deſi- s in earneſt to ſecure his own Salvation, muſt ure to keep his Eye conſtantly fixed upon Both

theſe; To believe what God hath revealed, and to live according to the Principles he profeſſes to believe. Which latter being, as I hinted before, the more difficult part of the Chriſtian's buſineſs, I ſhall apply my ſelf the more diligently in the following parts of this Work, to explain and illuſtrate the Virtues required of us, to remove thoſe Obſtructions and Difficulties, which might otherwiſe prove of ill Conſequence to us, and by all poſſible means to awaken and incite Mens ſluggiſh Hearts to the Conſideration and vigorous Proſecution of this moſt important Affair; upon which the endleſs Woe or Welfare of every one of my Readers does entirely depend.

CHAP. VI. SECT. I.

Of Eſchewing Evil, and Doing Good.

WHEN the Prophet *Iſaiah* inſtructs his People how they ſhould return, and render themſelves acceptable to God, he

Iſai. i. bids them *Ceaſe to do Evil, and learn to do well*; and *David* directs the Man who would live long and ſee

Pſalm xxxiv. good Days, to *eſchew Evil, and do good.* Which is in truth the ſum of the Chriſtian, as well as the Moral Law, and imports the very ſame thing, which the Apoſtles under the New Teſtament expreſs, *dying unto Sin, and living unto Righteouſneſs.*

Rom. vi. That this is the very end and buſineſs of the Goſpel is evident from St. *Paul*, who compriſes the Subſtance of it all in this one Point of a virtuous Converſation. *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men*; To what purpoſe? Or how does it bring *Salvation?* Even

Tit. ii. 11, 12.

us, *Teaching us, that denying all ungodliness and orldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and dly in this present world.* So that the Scriptures, these and sundry other Passages, reduce the whole actical Part of a Christian's Duty to two general ads; The declining and withstanding all Temp- ions to Vice, and the Exercise of all Piety and rtue. With respect to the Former, our Life is en termed a Warfare, a Fight, a striving for ma- ry; and good Men are styled Soldiers, Men that continually upon their guard, careful not to be prized by their Enemies, and in a constant dis- sition to resist and repel them. In regard of the tter, we are represented as Labourers, Hus- ndmen, Sowers of good Seed, Traders with our asters Talents, Stewards, wise Merchants, and like; because, by the Exercise of good Works purchase to our selves a good Inheritance, we urn our Lord his own with Interest, we approve r selves good and faithful Servants, we Till and ess our Lord's Vineyard, we bring in a prodigi- increase of Treasure, and are sure to reap in general Harvest of the last day, in proportion to which we have sown.

2 Tim. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6.

Matt. xx. 2 Tim. ii. 6. Gal vi. Matt. xxv. Luke xvi. Matt. xiii.

These then are the two main Instruments of our vation, which we are bound perpetually to use attend to; and they must ever go hand in nd; For neither of them singly is sufficient for purpose. Innocency of Life, without doing od, will give us no Title to the recompence the just; and Good Works, without a pure, blemished Conversation, will not attone for our s and Lusts, nor excuse us from the doom of wicked. The *Sacrifices* and *Prayers* of polluted en, are declared by God to be *an Abomination*; they, who served him in the Ordinances ap- nted by himself, were rejected as Hypocrites and worthy, while their Hands were full of Blood, they sought their own Pleasures, and did

Isai. i. and lviii.

Matt. xxv. their own Works. Again, the Virgins in the Parable reaped no Advantage from the Purity of that State, while Oil was wanting in their Lamps, and their good Works did not ſhine before Men; and, in the account of the laſt judgment, we find no actual Sin charged upon the Goats on the left hand; the Omiſſion of good Works was of it ſelf ſufficient to exclude them from Heaven, and ſink them into everlaſting Puniſhment. From all which we may learn the noble Perfection of a Chriſtian Life, if lead as it ought to be. How bright a Creature is He, who wilfully admits no ſtain in his Mind, or his Life! how uſeful and profitable a Servant, who neglects no opportunity of exerciſing all thoſe Virtues, which fall within the compaſs of his Practice?

SECT. II.

Of avoiding of Sin.

AS to the *Firſt* of theſe, it is evident, God has placed us in a State of Danger and Temptation. And theſe we are commanded to ſtrive and watch againſt with all our Might; to do it manfully, diligently, conſtantly, ſincerely; becauſe, as oft as we give ground and yield to the Enemy, we revolt from God, and are Traitors and Rebels to the Majeſty of Heaven. Hence we are called upon
Heb. xii. if occaſion ſhall require, *to reſiſt even unto blood, ſtriving againſt Sin*, to forego our very Lives, rather than our Duty. And, in the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, we are particularly warned of the hazard of the Combat, and how we ought to be provided for
Epheſ. vi. it: *Be ſtrong, my Brethren, in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole Armour of God,*

that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the Wiles of the Devil. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth, and having on the breaſt-plate of Righteouſneſs; and your feet ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of Peace. Above all, taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the wicked: And take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. So great need is there of our going out into the field well appointed againſt the Adverſary of Souls; and when we are thus prepared for the Conflict, our care muſt be to uſe this Armour well, to diſcharge the Duty of our reſpective Poſts, and to obey the Orders of our Leader punctually, for otherwiſe we fight to no purpoſe. And therefore St. *Paul* obſerves to his Son *Timothy*, that God expects the ſame regular Proceedings with thoſe of the Olympick Games then in uſe, and alluding to them, he ſays, *If a Man ſtrive alſo for Maſtery, yet is he not Crowned, except he ſtrive Lawfully*; *i. e.* unleſs he both exert himſelf vigorouſly, and obſerve the Rules preſcribed for winning the Prize. To the ſame purpoſe the other Apoſtles exhort us *to reſiſt the Devil*, and his wicked Inſtruments, *to be ſober and vigilant*, conſidering what ſort of enemy we have to encounter; and by no means to think our ſelves in any time abſolutely ſafe, but to continue ever mindful, that we live in a ſtate of War, and ſuch as muſt not have an end, ſo long as we continue to live here this Body.

2 Tim. ii. 5. James iv. 1 Pet. v. 1 John ii.

You wonder perhaps, how it comes to paſs, that our Bleſſed Lord, having done ſo much to conquer his mortal Enemy, and the power of Sin in him, ſhould yet expoſe his Followers to ſo many difficulties, and make it neceſſary for Them to fight after his Example. But one evident Reaſon of this is implyed in that Paſſage to *Timothy*, that none ſhall *be crowned without ſtriving Lawfully*. God did

not think fit to caſt away the Joys of Heaven upon thoſe who had done nothing for them; and therefore the Reward, which always ſuppoſes a Work antecedent to it, is ſuſpended upon this Condition; Rev. ii. 17. *To him that overcometh will I give the hidden Manna.* Rev. iii. 21. And again, *To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me on my Throne; even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father on his Throne.*

In which laſt Words there is another Reaſon of this proceeding diſcovered, wherein we ought to find very great and ſenſible ſatisfaction; For, how could Almighty God better expreſs his care and kindneſs, than by appointing, that we ſhould be made conformable to the Image of his dear Son? Remember, Chriſtian, that in all thy hardſhips thou followeſt the Captain of thy Salvation, and art travelling to Glory, through the ſame rugged Paths, which he did not diſdain to tread before thee. Thy hope and deſire is to be crowned with Him, and it would ill become thee to grudge the ſame terms of obtaining thy Crown, which he ſubmitted to for His. Combat and Conqueſt exalted Him to the right hand of God, and Theſe will bring thee into the joy and preſence of thy Lord. 'Tis upon this, as the laſt, moſt powerful, and moſt comfortable Conſideration, that the Apoſtle fixes, to ſuſtain the *Hebrews* under the heavy burthen of Perſecution and Affliction; Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. *Let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us: Looking unto* Jeſus *the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Throne of God.* And again, *Conſider him—leſt ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

Such

Such was the Encouragement given by St. *Paul*, ſuch the Exhortation grounded upon it: So reaſonable, that we ſhould contend earneſtly, and bend our utmoſt force, againſt all temptations to Sin; Becauſe by ſo doing only can we ſhew our ſelves Soldiers fit to be liſted under the Banner of this gallant Leader, and dutiful Children of His and Our common Father, who hath prepared ſo glorious an Inheritance for his ſuffering Sons. So manifeſtly do our hardſhips themſelves contribute to our advantage; ſo eminently do they promote the Glory, and evidence the Power of *Chriſt*; in that he was not only able to vanquiſh the Devil in his own divine Perſon, but ſtrengthens us by the aſſiſtance of his heavenly Grace, and overcomes him daily in his faithful ſervants and followers. Who, though of themſelves miſerably poor and weak, yet find their natural impotence marvelouſly ſuccoured and ſupported; and in the power of their Lord's Might triumph, and gain to themſelves glorious Crowns. And This, no doubt, is one excellent Reaſon, why, notwithſtanding the guilt of Original Sin be taken off by *Chriſt*'s death, and waſhed away in Baptiſm, yet the corrupt motions and ſeeds of that evil Concupiſcence are ſuffered ſtill to remain in our hearts; Not for our Prejudice, but for our Exerciſe and Tryal: To miniſter occaſions for Combat, and matter for Victory here, and Glory hereafter. And O! The Widom and Goodneſs of our gracious God! How truly tender is This Father of his Children, who ſo contrives their Duty, that even That, which gives them the greateſt trouble, is not only a neceſſary proof of their obedience, but converted into an Inſtrument of their greateſt advantage!

Upon this view it is, that St. *James* animates the Chriſtians to whom he writes, bidding them *account all Joy when they fall into divers Temptations*; and reaſon good they have to do ſo, ſince St. *Paul* aſſures us, that *God will not ſuffer* his Servants *to be* James i. 2. 1 Cor. x. 13.

be tempted above that they are able. Our bleſſed Lord in theſe Conflicts, takes great delight in obſerving our Courage and Conduct; he ſtands by, and looks on, and pours in ſeaſonable recruits; and This, not only as St. *Stephen* diſcerned him, in the outward ſufferings for the teſtimony of the Truth; but in every ſort of tryal, when we are engaged with the Luſts of the Fleſh, and the Allurements of the World, with the wicked Suggeſtions and ſubtle Inſinuations of the common Enemy of Souls. He ſuſtains us during the action, he comforts us when it is over, and rewards our conſtancy with Joys unſpeakable. How happy then are We to ſerve ſo good a Maſter, ſo ſolicitous for our ſucceſs, ſo careful to promote it, ſo ready to help in time of need? With what undaunted Reſolution ſhould we take the field under a Commander, who ſuffers none to fall, or be harmed, but Cowards and Renegadoes, ſuch as run away and dare not ſtand to their Arms, or ſuch as place an undue Confidence in their own ſtrength, and do not rely upon his Aid and Protection?

Having thus accounted briefly for the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, in making this Life a ſtate of war and hazard, nothwithſtanding the conqueſt himſelf hath gained over our mortal Enemy; I muſt now apply my ſelf to conſider, after what manner we ought to behave our ſelves in this Engagement: What diligence and circumſpection, what vigor and conſtancy, what ſeverity and reſolution is requiſite on our part. For, though this ſting of ſenſuality be left behind for our advantage, yet it is a moſt troubleſome and dangerous, a peſtilent and deadly Poiſon lurking in our Bowels, and, if it be not nicely watched, and cruſhed betimes, ſuch as will certainly prove our diſeaſe and death. St. *Paul* hath deſcribed to us the condition of ſuch men, where it is ſuffered to gather head. *I ſee another Law in my members, warring againſt the Law of my mind,*

Rom. vii. 23,24,25.

and

and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my members. O! wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jeſus Chriſt *our Lord.* Even Thoſe, who are baptized and are confirmed in Goodneſs, are often aſſaulted by this domeſtick Enemy. They feel a ſecret and ſtrong Propenſion to Evil, even when they are fully convinced, that they ought not to commit it. And for this corrupt Byaſs of Nature thus depraved nothing is a match, but the Grace of God; nothing an Antidote againſt this Venom, but the Blood of *Jeſus*; none able to deliver us from this Tyrant, but he who hath by his death bound the ſtrong man, and ſpoiled his houſe. To this Grace our own diligence and co-operation muſt not be wanting, for he will not ſave us without our own concurrence. And therefore the Apoſtle tells us, how he managed himſelf in this Encounter; *So fight I, not as one that beateth the Air*; not idly, 1 Cor. ix.
or at random, like Fencers when they flouriſh their Swords for Pomp and in Diverſion; But he fell on ſmartly, and ſhewed himſelf in very good earneſt. *I keep under my body*, ſays he, *and bring it into ſubjection, leſt after I have preached to others, I my ſelf ſhould be a caſt-away.*

Obſerve this, ye negligent and effeminate Chriſtians; that either decline this combat wholly, or behave your ſelves careleſly and delicately in it. See this choſen veſſel of God, after being taken up into the third heaven, and admitted to partake of myſteries ineffable, ſee him continually with ſword in hand, beating down the rebellious appetite by painful ſeverities, and mortification of the fleſhly and ſenſual part; making this, not only a ſubject, but a ſlave, to his nobler and rational; uſing it with rigor, keeping it at a due diſtance, having it at his beck, not ſuffering it to ſtep or look aſide, not to lift up ſo much as a finger without his allowance; and then conſider, what will become at laſt

laſt of all your nicety, and fond indulgence: or what Succeſs you muſt look for, who cheriſh Treachery at home, and encourage a malapert Servant, ready to fly in your face upon the leaſt connivance, and ſure to take part with your Enemy againſt you!

Nor may we think this rigor ſomething peculiar to the Perfection of an Apoſtle, for the ſame ſtrict diſcipline is enjoined as abſolutely neceſſary to every common Chriſtian. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the Earth*; and how they muſt be mortified he tells us, by commanding us to guard all the approaches to *Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Evil Concupiſcence, Coveteouſneſs*, &c. He makes this the diſtinguiſhing Character of a Chriſtian. *They that are* Chriſt's *have crucified the fleſh with the affections and luſts*: Theſe are the only means to preſerve our Life with God, either here acording to the Principle of Regeneration, or hereafter in the happineſs of being likened to our Lord in the glories of his Reſurrection. *If ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.* Herein then it is incumbent upon us to exerciſe our ſelves; and this is the nature of our Combat, that we chaſtiſe and ſubdue the body, bringing ſenſe and fleſh into ſubjection to the Spirit; to mortify and refuſe our corrupt inclinations; and let Reaſon and Religion have their juſt influences, and reign in our minds without controul. He that acts by this Rule is in the way of Life, he that pampers and makes proviſion for his Luſts, that indulges Eaſe and Appetite is in the broad way to Deſtruction. For in this ſenſe too, is that of our Saviour true, *He that loveth his Life, ſhall loſe it*: If he that labours to make life grateful and pleaſant, and to ſweeten it by preſent and ſenſual Delights, ſhall do it to his great and eternal Diſadvantage. But *he that hateth his life for* Chriſt's *ſake ſhall*

Col. iii.

Gal. v. 24.

Rom. viii. 13.

ſhall ſave it. He that uſes himſelf hardly, reſtrains his deſires, abominates exceſſes, ſubdues and mortifies this ſenſual Principle, for a ſhort life of ſobriety and ſtrictneſs here, ſhall be an infinite gainer in the end, and find himſelf abundantly recompenced by a Life of happineſs unſpeakable and eternal.

Hence hath this War againſt Sin and Concupiſcence been always proſecuted with ſuch vehement application by the beſt of Chriſtians in all Ages. They eſteemed it a ſmall thing to abſtain from ſuch raging wickedneſs, as is a ſcandal to the ſober ſenſe of Mankind, or even from the act of other Sins forbidden in the Goſpel; but thus carried their point a great deal farther, and would not allow ſo much as the inward and ſecret conſent of the Heart. For thus our Lord hath taught us that from the inſtant of the Will agreeing to the Temptation, the Sin is committed before God; though fear, or ſhame, or want of opportunity, or any other accidental hindrance, prevent its breaking out into actual commiſſion. For it is very obſervable, that St. *James* hath diſtinguiſhed three Steps or Degrees, by which Sin advances to Perfection: And theſe are *Suggeſtion*, *Delight*, and *Conſent*. The firſt is the Enemy's Work; the Second proceeds from the temper of our ſenſual and depraved Appetite; the Laſt is the reſult of our own Reaſon and Choice. The firſt may be without any fault of ours; The ſecond ordinarily proceeds from ſome neglect of putting a better bent upon our Affections, and drawing them off from the love and reliſh of ſenſitive Objects; the Laſt always renders us guilty before God: The ſeed of Sin is ſown by the Firſt, it is cheriſhed and brought forward by the ſecond, but arrives to perfection in the Laſt. Since then the inward conſent of the Mind is That, in which the very Eſſence of Sin conſiſts; (For even an action ſinful in it ſelf, is not

a Sin

a Sin in him who commits the outward act without such inward consent;) a good Christian is obliged to be vigilant in every one of these degrees. In the First, by industriously avoiding all the occasions of Sin, declining those Persons Conversation, whose Example, or Discourse, would suggest evil Inclinations, and in short every thing, whereby the Man hath formerly found, or hath reason to suspect himself apt to fall. In the second, by suppressing those Suggestions early, when they come; not suffering the Soul to feed upon, or delight herself in them, but crushing the Cockatrice in the Egg, and stifling the Motions to Sin, as soon as ever we discover them. But if we should be too remiss in this Point too, and not only feel, but relish evil motions; yet at least we must be sure to manage our Third Point; to fight resolutely in defence of our last Entrenchment, and not yield up the consent of the Heart, which is our only Security; for if that be lost, the Foe is within us, and we are undone for ever.

Now, in order to the discharging our Duty in the Two last of these instances especially, for in them lies our greatest danger, there is a Twofold Caution necessary. The First is to be exceeding watchful over our own Actions, and Words, nay even our very Thoughts; *To fear all our own Works*, with holy *Job*; and with *David*, *to commune with our own heart, and make diligent search into our Spirit.* Which Exercise of Examination we find practised with great exactness by the Saints of the New Testament also. For St. *Paul* had performed it so nicely, as to affirm, that he was not to his knowledge guilty of any offence against God; yet would he not, even upon this acquittal of his Conscience, presume to declare himself justified in the Eye of an All-seeing God. And not only these celebrated Saints, but all prudent and good Men, who have had a tender regard to the success of this Spiritual Engagement,

Psalm lxxxvii. 9.

Engagement, have retain'd this moſt profitable cuſtom of ſtrictly and frequently examining their own Conſciences, and taking the moſt preciſe account of their Thoughts, Words, and Actions, that the frailty of Human Nature could qualify them for. The Second Caution is very reſolutely and diligently to mortify our Paſſions, to correct the byaſs of our depraved Inclinations, to draw our Affections to proper and worthy Objects, and diſengage them from ſuch as Senſuality and Concupiſcence are apt to entangle them in. Thus we weaken the force of our Enemy, and cut off the Powers he deſigns to attack us with. For nothing is of more approved Excellence in this reſpect, than the keeping our Bodies in ſtrict Temperance, ſubduing them with Abſtinence and corporal Affliction. And in our Age, which is ſo little addicted to this ſelf-denying part of Religion, it would appear almoſt incredible, ſhould I undertake to ſhew, what Care and Zeal the Saints heretofore uſed in applying this Remedy. Sr. *Paul* ſays of himſelf, and his Brethren the other Apoſtles, that they ſerved God continually in *Watchings*, in *Faſtings*, in *Hunger and Thirſt*, in *Cold and Nakedneſs*. The like Auſterities we are told of by many of the Primitive Preachers and firſt Profeſſors of Chriſtianity. Among whom afterwards many retired from the World, and ſequeſter'd themſelves altogether from Buſineſs and Pleaſure; that ſo they might be out of the way and reach of temptations; they fled to Deſarts, and Dens, and Caves; and there exerciſed ſuch Abſtemiouſneſs and Rigour, as are a great Reproach to the Senſuality and Luxury of looſer and later Ages. They paſſed whole Days and Nights in Prayer to God, and, having abandoned all thoughts of the World, employ'd their Minds entirely in Pious Meditations, in refining and exalting their Affections, and in putting themſelves into ſuch a frame of Soul, as might beſt prepare them

2 Cor. vi.

them for the purity of thoſe bleſſed Regions above, which they thought no Severities, no Pains too great to obtain.

Thus did theſe bleſſed and renowned Saints heretofore demean themſelves; And all this they eſteemed their Duty, for the more effectual ſubduing Sin, and maintaining a good Conſcience unſpotted from the World, and unimpaired by the Aſſaults of their Ghoſtly Enemy! But alas! my Friends, how do we manage this important Affair? What pains are we content to be at? What Solicitude do we expreſs? What guard do we keep upon our Actions and Words, much leſs upon our Thoughts? Who is there that fleeth the occaſions of Sin? Who indeed rather does not ſeek and provoke them, and turn his own Tempter? Who labours in mortifying the Fleſh and its Appetites? nay, who does not cheriſh, and indulge, and inflame them? Are we not led away Captive by the Enemy of Souls at his Will, and yield to every Temptation; ſwallow every Bait in our way, even though we know there is Poiſon and Death upon the Hook? Merciful God! what a degenerate State of Chriſtianity are we fallen into! And what can be the End of ſuch wretched negligence! No other certainly, than that of the careleſs and voluptuous Sinner, deſcribed by *Solomon*; *I diſcerned a man void of underſtanding, and behold there met him an Harlot ſubtle of heart: With much fair Speech ſhe cauſed him to yield, with the flattering of her Lips ſhe forced him. He goeth after her as an Ox to the Slaughter, as a Bird haſteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.*

Prov. vii.

What is here ſaid of One is true of every kind of Temptation. The Compliance wounds our Souls to Death, and brings them into bondage to a mortal and mercileſs Enemy. We diſarm and enfeeble our ſelves by negligence, and vicious habits, and have nothing but a miracle of Grace left for our deliverance

verance. *Whoſoever committeth Sin, is the Servant of* John viii.
Sin, (ſays our bleſſed Saviour) and (the Wiſe Man) 34.
The Wicked ſhall be holden with the Cords of Iniqui- Prov. v.
ty. Theſe, like a ſtrong Chain, entangle and com- 22.
paſs him in; a Chain, that we cannot ſee to the
End of, and whoſe firſt Link is faſtned in Hell
itſelf. And by what degrees it draws us down
hither, ſome Holy Fathers have obſerved in this
manner: Suggeſtion draws on Thought, Thought
engages our Affection, Affection produces Delight,
Delight perſuades our Conſent, Conſent advan-
ces into Acts, Acts beget Habits, Habits harden
and tempt us to Deſpair of Mercy, Deſpair defends
the Sins it commits; after which follow Glorying
in Wickedneſs, Defiance of God, and Contempt
of, and Scoffing at Religion, which is as it were
the beginning of, and entrance upon Damnation it
ſelf. To theſe unretrievable Miſeries are wretched
Men reduced for want of timely care in reſiſting
Temptations, and in reſtraining the motions of their
ſenſual Appetites. For (as the Son of *Sirach* well
obſerves) *If thou giveſt thy Soul the deſires that* Ecclus
pleaſe her, ſhe will make thee a laughing-ſtock to thy xviii. 31.
Enemies. And is it poſſible, that Men ſhould be ſo
ſtupid in their owh apparent and incurable Dan-
gers? The World is now grown to that deſperate
pitch, of *drinking up Iniquity as Beaſts do Water*, Job xv.
without ſcruple or remorſe; ſo far from doubt or 19.
examination, that Heaven and Hell are eſteemed no
better than Dreams and Fables, the Imaginations of
ſick Fancy; Sobriety is Preciſeneſs; Religion
Singularity; Mortification Madneſs; Men *make*
their Belly their God, and *their Mouth their Shame*; but
whether they will hear, or whether they will for-
bear, the Apoſtle hath pronounced their doom; for
the *End of ſuch* moſt certainly *is Deſtruction*. Phil. iii.
He therefore, who does not only aſſume, but 19.
expect benefit by, the Name of a Chriſtian, will
beware of this dangerous Snare, and apply him-

ſelf to withſtand and correct the Inclinations of de-praved Nature, early and in good earneſt. He wil cruſh the Head of the Serpent as ſoon as ever h begins to wind himſelf into his Soul; and take ſuc methods, as the *Second* Part of this Treatiſe ſha direct. In the mean while, that which hath bee already ſaid, leaves him (I ought not to doubt) a bundantly convinced of the mighty Importanc and Neceſſity of this Care; and the complicated the diſmal, the unſpeakable Miſchiefs, into whic Men are betrayed for want of Diligence and Watch fulneſs in the waging of this Spiritual War.

SECT. III.

Of Doing Good.

I Now proceed to the Second Branch of a Chriſtian's buſineſs; which conſiſts in the Improvement of Virtue, and the Exerciſe of good Work And in this regard it is, that we find Such in Scripture reſembled to Labourers, to Huſbandmen, Stewards, to Merchants, and the like. With reſp to Men conſidered under theſe Capacities, they Hoſ. x. 12. adviſed to *ſow to themſelves in Righteouſneſs, that t* Prov xi. 18. *may reap in Mercy:* They are told, that *to him t* Eccleſ. ix. 10. *ſoweth Righteouſneſs, ſhall be a ſure Reward.* Th are admoniſhed, *Whatſoever their Hand findeth to to do it with their might:* They are put in m by St. *Paul*, that *Jeſus Chriſt* came into the Wo Tit. ii. 14. for this very purpoſe, *to purify unto himſelf a pe liar People, zealous of Good Works*; and that Ch Eph. ii. 10. ſtians are *God's Workmanſhip, created in Chriſt ſus unto Good Works.* Their Condition is rep ſented by our Lord himſelf, under the Figure Servants, entruſted with Talents by their Maſ who is gone into a far Country to receive to h ſelf a Kingdom, and hath left orders, that t ſho

hould *traffick till he come*; and that, at that co- Luke xix.
ning, he will not fail to require an account, to re-
ard their Diligence and Fidelity, and to puniſh
eir Sloth and Unfaithfulneſs. Theſe, and many
ther Paſſages make it moſt evident, that the Life
d Calling of a Chriſtian in this World is deſign-
for a State of Labour and Diligence, and great
nprovement; Or, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *to be*
itful in every good work, and increaſe in the know- Col. i. 10.
dge of God: That the time allowed us here below
the Seaſon of Sowing and Planting; the day of
erchandiſe, to make a wiſe Bargain for the
ngdom of Heaven: For ſo ſhall the painful,
induſtrious, the provident have Praiſe of God,
d an advantageous return for all his Toil and Ex-
nce, ſuch as will certainly be the making of him
ever: But the ſlothful and negligent ſhall be
erwhelmed with Confuſion and Miſery, with
erlaſting Poverty and Contempt. Thus are thoſe
ſervations of the Wiſe-man moſt true, in a my-
al and ſpiritual Senſe alſo; *The hand of the di-*
nt maketh rich. He that tilleth his Land, ſhall
reaſe his Heap; and with reſpect to the time of
d Age, the time of Death, and the diſtant Con-
ns of an Eternity, in which we ſhall have nothing
ſubſiſt upon, but what we lay up now, and car-
with us from hence, may that Reproof be ad-
ſſed to every careleſs Chriſtian; *Go to the Ant,* Prov. vi.
u Sluggard, conſider her ways and be wiſe: Which 6, 7, 8.
ing no guide, overſeer, or ruler, provideth her
at in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the
rveſt. And This indeed is the moſt excellent,
moſt profitable Wiſdom, to gather a Bank for
time to come; and prepare for our Journey in-
that Country, where there are no freſh Provi-
s to be had. This is that Wiſdom, to which
ſon of *Sirach* with ſuch variety of moving Ar-
ments invites us. *Come unto her, as one that* Ecclus vi.
weth and Soweth, and wait for her good fruits; thou 19, &c.

ſhalt not toil much in labouring about her, but thou ſhalt eat of her Fruits right ſoon. She is very unpleaſant to the ignorant; he that is without underſtanding will not remain with her. But come thou to her with thy whole Heart, and keep her ways with all thy Power: For at the laſt thou ſhalt find her Reſt; and thy ſhall be turned to thy Joy.

For the obtaining which Joy it is, that St. Paul at every turn importunes Men with ſuch holy vehemence, that they would *abound in good Works*, that they would do them at all times, to all Men, that they would do them with cheerfulneſs, and not grow weary of ſo excellent a Practice; aſſuring us, that our *Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*; that *God will not forget their love who miniſter to the Saints*; and that he would be in ſome ſort *unrighteous*, if he ſhould. This is the End aimed at by our Bleſſed Saviour, in his Parable of the *Unjuſt Steward*, whoſe prudence and forecaſt we are exhorted to imitate, *in making to our ſelves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlaſting Habitations*. And in a word, This Grace of Liberality and Charity, and All others, which may adorn the Goſpel of Chriſt, and the Converſation of his Followers, we are frequently called upon to ſet about in good earneſt, while we have time, and our *day* laſteth, conſidering, as our Lord hath given us warning, that *the Night draweth on, wherein no Man can work*. And here again we may find but too juſt matter of Shame and Confuſion, if we would ſtate the compariſon between our own and the earlier Ages of the Goſpel: The diligent and indefatigable pains That were beſtowed upon cultivating their Souls; and the ſenſleſs ill Huſbandry and Lazineſs we are guilty of. The Zeal, with which they caſt their Seed into the Ground in vaſt quantities; the publick Bleſſings they brought to their generation while living; and the noble and uſeful Monuments of their Charity, which

Gal. vi. 10. 2 Cor. ix. 7, 8. 1 Cor. xv. 58. Heb. vi. 10. John ix. 4.

hich they ſpeak to all Poſterity when dead: The ious Foundations and Endowments ſet apart for e promotion of Learning, the Improvement of uſe- l Arts, the more undiſturbed exerciſe of Religion, e Relief of the Poor, the Lame, the Blind, the ged; the Sums expended in Service of the Pub- k, and ſuch Conveniences, as are not the leaſt eful, though leaſt regarded, inſtances of Charity. heſe and many more good Works were then the ifts of Chriſtians: Not only out of their ſuperflui- and abundance, but by ſtraitning themſelves in the nveniences, nay the very Neceſſaries of Life, and renching the Fortunes of their Families; that ſo ey might contribute to the Benefit of Souls, to the onour of God, to the Advantage of Mankind, and ure to their Children the Bleſſing and Bounty of etter Father in Heaven. But alas! We are ſo far m giving Neceſſaries, as very rarely to moderate Vanities, or take off from our Sins for the ſake of ng Good. Grandeur, and Equipage, and Port, now lookt upon as more indiſpenſable than Cha- ; and thoſe Creatures, which contribute meerly our Pomp, or our Diverſion, more tenderly, more nptuouſly maintained, than the naked and hungry embers of *Chriſt*: So void of Piety and Charity, ſtupid and brutiſh are We, ſo worthleſs, ſo un- fitable, ſo ſcandalous, if put into the Balance h thoſe who were formerly Chriſtians indeed, and nifeſtly proved their Faith by their Works.

From the two heads of Duty treated of in this apter, I beg my Reader to obſerve two things.

Firſt, What a Lovely and Excellent Creature a y good Chriſtian is; whoſe conſtant care it is keep himſelf and every Action unblemiſhed with ; and whoſe perpetual work it is to ſerve God, to profit Men, by all poſſible ways that his Pru- teſt conſideration can ſuggeſt, and his utmoſt ver extend to. Were theſe things performed by n Perfection, according to the Pattern our Bleſ-

ſed Maſter ſet us, what a Heaven upon Earth woul this make? No Malice or Contention, no Vi lence or Deceit, no Wickedneſs or Impurity Manners; no Law neceſſary to contain Men their Duty, but only Religion, the Law of *Chriſt* o King. For this alone would purify our Hearts a Intentions, would unite our Affections, would i flame our Devotions, and equal us to Angels, in Co cord, in Zeal, in Innocence. But alas! by abando ing theſe two great Lines of our Duty, the very He then and Infidels are more civilized, leſs diſſolu leſs prophane than We. Which, beſides the diſh nour it reflects upon our Lord and his Religio muſt needs aggravate our condemnation exceedin ly; and make our caſe hereafter the ſame with th places which our Saviour upbraids for havi wrought his Miracles, and preached his Divine D ctrines there without effect. *Wo unto thee, Chorazi Wo unto thee, Bethſaida! For if the mighty works b been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done You; they would have repented long ago, in Sa cloth and Aſhes. Wherefore I ſay unto you, ſhall be more tolerable in the day of Judgment for T and Sidon, than for you.*

Matth. xi. 21, 22.

Secondly, We may likewiſe take notice from hen how very different Lives the Virtuous and the Wic lead in This, and conſequently, how very differ Portions they receive in that other World, wh God ſhall render to every Man according to Works. The ſober and vigilant Chriſtian doth only abſtain (ſo much as human Frailty may) fr all Sin, eſpecially from ſuch as is wilful and mor which All, by God's aſſiſtance, may avoid; but continual ſtriving and inflexible reſiſtance he ſtre thens his Title to a Crown in Heaven. But Careleſs and Unwary conſents to every Luſt, co plies with every Temptation, and heaps Sin u Sin, without meaſure, number or end. The dilig Chriſtian does not only preſerve *a Conſcience voi*

off

ffence towards God and towards Man, but does (at eaſt in diſpoſition and deſire) perform infinite good Works; and where his Abilities fail, that Diſpoſi-ion and Deſire are accepted and accounted to him. But the diſſolute and wicked is neither good in Deed, or ſo much as in Will. He hath a long Black Cata-ogue of Evils to anſwer for; and he employs his Wit, his Affections, his Body, his Strength, and all is Faculties and Powers, in the Service of Iniquity, nd to the advancing the Kingdom of his own, and *Chriſt*'s declared Enemy. So that as the other ob-ins increaſe of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter, is Wretch *Treaſures up to himſelf Wrath againſt the ay of Wrath*, and takes pains to enſure Vengeance nd Damnation. And, ſince each of theſe live nd die ſo contrary to one another, can we wonder at their Condition ſhould be equally oppoſite in e next World, where Men's Fate depends entire-upon what they have done in this?

Let us then learn to be wiſe, while we have Time efore us. If we find upon enquiry, that we have one in a wrong way hitherto, let us thank God for e mighty benefit of being brought to a Senſe of our rror, before it be too late to amend it. Many, no oubt, are now howling in Hell Fire, who never ought of this matter at all; but who, if they had en awaken'd as we are, or ought to be now by theſe ry Conſiderations, might perhaps have eſcaped oſe dreadful Torments, to which they are for ever ven up without any poſſibility of redreſs. Take e then, my Chriſtian Friends, to convert this ercy to your Advantage, and not to your deeper d more inſupportable Condemnation. Caſt not a-y wilfully your precious Souls; thoſe Jewels, which e Son of God thought worth redeeming at ſo dear Price; which he ſo paſſionately deſires to ſave, d to ennoble with the Riches of his Grace, and e-rlaſting Glory. O give them up entirely to his ſpoſal, lodge them in ſafe hands, and be content,

for ſuch a Recompence, to live according to his Directions. Remember, you muſt die; and therefore do that very thing this moment, which, when you come to die, you would give the whole World that you had done. And, becauſe the conſideration of our latter End is a moſt powerful Motive to do well; and Death and Judgment are the very things, which muſt determine our Affairs for all Eternity; I cannot purſue this Argument of a good Life better, than by offering in the next place ſome quickning and ſeaſonable Reflections upon theſe two moſt important *Points*.

CHAP. VII. SECT. I.

Of the Laſt Great Day of Account.

THE greateſt Wiſdom of Servants in this Life is duly to remember what ſort of Maſter they have to deal with, what Account he will require of the Truſt repoſed in them, and what Puniſhments he hath power to inflict, in caſe of Unfaithfulneſs or Neglect. And, ſince every Chriſtian ſtands in the ſame Relation to Almighty God; nothing can be more adviſeable, than to conſider very ſeriouſly, what reckoning he is like to be called to, and how his Lord will proceed in it: whether he is to Audit his Accounts with an eaſy, or a mild, or a weak, or elſe with an auſtere and a ſtrict Maſter; One that will be moſt exact in his Enquiries, and is mighty to revenge any Failure of Duty, and Breach of Truſt. And of this matter we cannot remain long in doubt, if we will but attend to theſe two things.

Firſt, The Method God took to publiſh and promulge his Law to this World; with what marks of wonderful and dreadful Majeſty; with what Thunder and Trumpets, and Earthquakes, and other Circumſtanc

cumſtances of Terror that Rule of Life contained in the Ten Commandments was iſſued out to the People of *Iſrael*. All which St. *Paul* urges, as an Argument how exceedingly afraid to break this Law Men ought to be. For it is a known Caſe, that ſuch dreadful Pomp is never uſed to no purpoſe; and that the Publication of any Law is not near ſo terrible, as the execution of it upon Offenders. Exod. xix. 20. Heb. xii. 18, &c.

Secondly, Another Conſideration which may give us right Notions of this Matter, is that of the Judge, or Lord Himſelf, to whom we are accountable. Now *we muſt all appear before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*, ſays the Apoſtle, *that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* This Truth our Lord himſelf hath inſtructed us in, by ſundry Parables, particularly that of the Talents. He hath told us the Manner and End of his Appearance; *The Son of Man ſhall come in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels, and then ſhall he reward every Man according to his works:* He hath warned us how far that Account ſhall extend; that for *every idle word Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall anſwer for it at the day of Judgment.* We are likewiſe inſtructed elſewhere, that this Account ſhall be exquiſitely nice and ſevere; that the leaſt Errors and Offences ſhall not be forgotten or over-look'd: *For God ſhall bring every work into Judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* 2 Cor. v. 10. Matth. xxv. Matth. xvi. 27. Matth. xii. 36. Eccleſ. xii. 14.

Now of this Judgment we may obſerve two kinds, intimated in Scripture. The one *Particular*, which paſſes upon every Soul immediately upon her departure out of the Body: *For it is appointed for all Men once to die, and after that the Judgment.* The other *General*, which ſhall be executed upon the whole World ſummoned together at the laſt great Day. And of this we are to underſtand *Chriſt*'s Coming in Glory. Now, though in the former of theſe, the Soul receives its irrevocable Sentence, (as may be Heb. ix. 27. Matt. xxv. 31, &c. Luke xvi.

be gathered from the Parable of the Rich-man and *Lazarus*, aſſigned to their reſpective ſtates and apartments of Reſt and Torment, as ſoon as they died) yet there are many excellent Reaſons, why God, beſides this Private and Perſonal, hath ordained, and reſerved Men to another Tryal; which ſhall be Univerſal, Publick, and Manifeſt, performed in view of the whole World. As particularly Theſe that follow.

1. *Firſt*, That the Bodies of Men which ſhall be awakened, and brought back from the Grave, may partake with their Souls, in that Eternal Bliſs or Woe, deſigned for the Reward or Puniſhment of thoſe Virtues or Vices, in which the Body did likewiſe bear a part, while converſing with, and united to, the Soul in this preſent Life. 2. *Secondly*, That *Chriſt*, who in the Days of his Fleſh upon Earth, was diſhonoured and deſpiſed, may once in the end of the World appear in full Luſtre of Majeſty and Power, to the utter confuſion of his Enemies; who after that Day ſhall never behold him more. 3. *Thirdly*, That the Wicked and the Righteous may receive their Recompence openly, to the greater Diſcomfort of the Former; the more triumphant Joy of the Latter; and the clearer manifeſtation of the Righteous Proceedings of this Judge. To which ſome have added, 4. A *Fourth* Reaſon, *viz.* That the good and ill Effects of what Men have done here by their Examples, their Inſtructions, their Books, and the like, may alſo come into the Account: Which cannot ſo conveniently be reckoned, or rewarded while this World continues; becauſe the Effects, of which they laid the Foundations in their Life-time, may be perpetually increaſing, ſo long as there are Succeſſions of Men, capable of being Profited, or Prejudiced by them. Thus ſome have been of Opinion, that St. *Paul* (for inſtance) receives a daily Addition to his Glory and Happineſs, in proportion to the Benefit received by his Writings and holy

holy Life in every Age of Chriſtianity; that the old Hereticks are more and more tormented, as more Souls are corrupted by their Peſtilent Errors; that diſſolute *Poets*, and other Propagators of Vice, have their Reckoning inflamed by all the Debauchery, which the Compoſures they leave behind them occaſion in the World: That the Negligence of Parents and Maſters, of Magiſtrates and Miniſters, ſhall add to their Condemnation, as the Miſcarriages of Perſons under their Care ſhall have grown by their Connivance, or the ill Principles countenanced and inſtilled by them. But now after this General Judgment, the ſtate of Diſcipline is at an end. No Man then is capable of becoming better or worſe in his Moral Capacity: And therefore this is a proper time for a final Sentence, becauſe it can have a full View, and take in all the Good and Evil, done or occaſioned from the firſt Beginning, to the abſolute conſummation of the World.

Of this laſt General Judgment then, which ratifies the Particular one paſſed before, and makes up the whole Account with all Mankind, the Scripture often admoniſhes us moſt carefully to meditate; to look upon it as our moſt important Affair; and to apply it to our Conſciences, as the moſt Powerful reſtraint from Sin, which mortal and frail Men can poſſibly have recourſe to. And therefore, *knowing this terror of the Lord*, I ſhall, with the Apoſtle, endeavour to *Perſuade Men*, by laying before them ſome of thoſe things delivered in Scripture concerning it. And that with regard (1.) To the Preparatory Diſpenſations antecedent to it; (2.) The Proceedings of that Day it ſelf; and (3.) The Conſequences of that Judgment, or the different ſtates of Men afterwards, according to the Sentence then Pronounced upon them.

2 Cor. v. 11.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Of the Diſpenſations preparatory to the General Judgment.

TO beget in Men a more awful Senſe of this terrible Day, and to expreſs the Majeſty and the Horrors of it, Almighty God hath thought fit to ordain certain Tokens of its Approach, and to reveal to us what they ſhall be, that we may the better provide to meet our God, and not be ſurpriſed with that Coming; upon a due Preparation for which our All depends. Some of theſe our Bleſſed Lord hath deſcribed thus to his Diſciples. *When ye ſhall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for theſe things muſt firſt come to paſs, but the end is not by and by. Nation ſhall riſe up againſt Nation, and Kingdom againſt Kingdom: And great Earthquakes ſhall be in divers places, and famines, and peſtilences, and fearful ſights, and great ſigns ſhall there be from Heaven.* Thus are the grievous and manifold afflictions, which uſher in the Day of Judgment, ſo many Warnings and Repreſentations of the Miſeries to commence at that Day: And our Lord (ſays St. *Gregory*) declares, That the End ſhould not immediately follow the Wars and Commotions; becauſe it is fit, that great variety of temporal Calamities ſhould go before, to awaken in Men the Impreſſion and Dread of thoſe eternal Miſeries which ſhall come after. But beſides the Miſeries among Men, there are other Evidences of this Day to be attended to; for all Nature ſhall conſpire in giving warning of it; and every Creature, every Element, proclaim its dreadful motion towards us. *There ſhall be ſigns* (ſays our Lord again) *in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars. For the Sun ſhall be darkened, and the Moon ſhall not give her light; and the Stars ſhall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens ſhall be ſhaken. The Heavens ſhall*

Luke xxi. 9, &c.

Matth. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi.

ſhall paſs away, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent heat: The Earth alſo, and all the works that are herein, ſhall be burnt up. And upon the Earth ſhall be diſtreſs of Nations, with perplexity; the Sea and the Waves roaring; Mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things, which are coming on the World. To which account by our Lord himſelf, if we add the Prophecies of *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, and *Joel*, and St. *John* in his Revelation, nothing can be expreſs'd in terms more moving, more amazing. For who can reflect on thoſe incomprehenſible Terrors, without Fear and Trembling? What manner of Day do we think will that be, when the Heavens ſhall put on mourning; when this whole Earth ſhall totter, and quake as a Leaf before the Wind; when the Sun and Moon ſhall loſe their Light, the Stars drop from their Orbs, the Sea forſake its Channels, the Earth be drown'd in a Deluge of Blood, and the whole World at once on a flaming fire? Can we wonder, that even Angels and Juſt Men are ſaid to be afraid at that Day? And then according to St. *Peter*'s way of Reaſoning, *If the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* What ſhall become of the careleſs and diſſolute Chriſtian, when he ſhall ſee ſuch an Ocean of Miſeries ruſhing in upon him? O that Men would think upon this Torrent of Woes, while they may be diverted and eſcaped! O that they would awake now, and prepare to ſtand firm at that hour, when the laſt Trumpet ſhall awake them, whether they will or not! That we would all follow St. *Jerom*'s Example, and *neither eat, nor drink, nor ſleep, nor take any matter whatſoever* in hand, without the awful remembrance of this Day, and thinking how we ſhall then be able to anſwer, for what we are now doing! For to this purpoſe are all the Warnings of this Day given us, and the ſolemn Preparations to it, as lively as words can paint them: And fit indeed they are to uſher in that which makes the ſecond Branch of my preſent Argument.

2 Pet. iii. 10.

Ezek. xxxviii. Dan. vii. 9, 10. Joel ii. Rev. vi. 9. and xi. 13.

1 Pet. iv. 18.

SECT.

SECT. III.

The Proceedings of that Day it ſelf.

WHEN the neceſſary Preliminaries are over, and all things in readineſs for the Judge's coming in, *Then ſhall all the Tribes of the Earth ſee the Son of Man coming in the Clouds, with Power and great Glory. And he ſhall ſend his Angels at midnight with a great cry, and they ſhall gather together his Elect in the twinkling of an Eye, from the one end of Heaven to the other.* Thus ſhall he mount his Throne in Majeſty terrible, as his former Appearance was deſpicable and humble; and the meek Lamb once ſlain for the Sins of the World, ſhall put on the Vengeance of an angry Lion. For who *may abide the day of his coming, when the very Mountains ſhall melt before him? When the Lord ſhall be mighty and ſtrong, as a tempeſt of Hail, and a deſtroying Storm, as a flood of mighty Waters overflowing, which caſteth down all in its way?*

Matth. xxiv. 30. Mark xiii. 26, 27. Luke xxi. 1 Cor. xv.

Mal. iii. 2.

Iſa. lxiv. 1. Iſa. xxviii. 22.

The Judge then being ſeated, and all the Nations of the Earth convened before him, the Scriptures proceed to deſcribe the order of this Proceſs. *I beheld* (ſays *Daniel*) *and the Ancient of Days did ſit; thouſand thouſands miniſtred unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtood before him; the Judgment was ſet, and the Books were opened. And all thoſe that were dead*, ſays St. *John*, *were judged out of the things written in thoſe Books; every one according to his works.* So that theſe Books, by which our Cauſe muſt be try'd, ſhall be the Evidences produced of Mens Actions in this Life, the teſtimony of their own Conſciences, and the infallible Records of God's exact Obſervation and Remembrance. Then ſhall every Creature bear witneſs againſt the Reprobate: The Heaven and Earth contrived for their Benefit and Comfort; the Conveniences and Enjoyments of

Dan. vii. 9, 10.

Rev. xx. 12.

of this World, which were abuſed by their inordinate fondneſs; the Companions that ſinned with them; the good Men afflicted and oppreſt by them; the Saints and Miniſters of God, whom they have ſet at naught; but above all the Myſtery of their Redemption, whoſe Glories then ſhall be diſplay'd, and vindicated by theſe Wretches Ruin. Theſe and infinite Bleſſings ſhall riſe up againſt them, to reproach and condemn that Ingratitude, which offended ſo gracious a God; who by ſo many inſtances of Love and Goodneſs, endeavoured in vain to win them to his Service.

Then ſhall the Righteous ſtand in great Boldneſs before the face of ſuch as have afflicted him, and made no account of his Labours. But the Wicked ſhall be troubled with terrible fear; they ſhall cry to the Hills, Fall on us; and to the Mountains, Cover us from the face of Him that ſitteth on the Throne, and of the Lamb; for the great Day of his wrath is come. This is that Day of the Lord, cruel with indignation, and fierce anger; to lay the Earth deſolate, and to deſtroy the ſinners out of it. Thy Day, O Lord, for ſo by way of Eminence thou wilt have it called; whereas the time of Tryal in this preſent Life, thou condeſcendeſt to call *Our* Day. In this Day thou art content to hold thy Peace, and patiently to ſuffer Sinners in their own Wicked Courſes; but in that Day thou wilt vindicate thy Honour, and by the Execution of Juſtice make thy ſelf known to the Terror of thine Enemies. For thou ſhalt then be manifeſt to all, Good and Bad ſhall be preſent at this Work, and none exempted from his Portion in it. Therefore, remember, Reader, that what thou now, perhaps too negligently, runneſt over, thou ſhalt hereafter ſee in ſuch perfection, as no words can deſcribe, no human Imagination can conceive. Wiſd. v. 1, 2. Rev. vi. 16.

Good God! What a Day ſhall that be, when all the Sons of *Adam* ſhall meet, when the Earth and Sea give up their Bodies, and Heaven and Hell ſend

ſend back the Souls they Poſſeſs to be again united to thoſe Bodies? How will theſe two old Acquaintance meet? How joyfully the Good, how dolefully the Wicked? The Godly to receive the Bodies they once lived in, to a participation of their Bliſs, and therefore theſe ſhall exult and ſing. But how ſhall the Damned bear to ſee thoſe Bodies, which have been the occaſions and inſtruments of their Sin and Miſery: Eſpecially knowing that this ſecond Union is only the Beginning of greater and eternal Sorrows? Is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe they will curſe, and abhor, and bitterly inveigh againſt every Member and Part, whoſe Luſts and Exceſſes were formerly gratified, at the ſad expence of eternal Torment and Ruin? Such will be the lamentable condition of ſinful Souls at that Day. But alas! Lamentation will avail them nothing, for the Law muſt have its Courſe. For *then ſhall the King divide the Goats from the Sheep.* O dreadful Separation! What would the greateſt Princes and Conquerors of this Earth give for the loweſt room among the *Sheep on the right hand?* They who had once the World at will, and all Dignity and Honour in their Diſpoſal, would now eſteem the Lot of the meaneſt, and once moſt deſpiſed of God's Elect, an Advancement more to be coveted, than Crowns and Laurels, the Pomp and Wealth of ten thouſand Worlds. Were they to live again, this would be their Choice: For truſt me, Reader, we ſhall think and judge at that Day after a manner quite different from what we do now. But alas! 'tis too late for Sinners to correct their Opinions then. They muſt ſtand to what is paſt, the Proceſs is begun, the Judge preſent, whoſe Power they cannot avoid, whoſe Wiſdom they cannot deceive, whoſe Equity they cannot bend, whoſe Anger they cannot appeaſe, whoſe Determination they cannot change, and from whoſe Sentence there lies no Appeal.

Mat. xxv. 32.

O m

O my Friends! how ineſtimable a Treaſure will a good Conſcience be at that Day? a Conſcience that will bear us out, when Princes and all the Great Ones ſtand naked and trembling, and have nothing to urge in Bar to the Puniſhment of thoſe Sins in which now they glory. Wealth and Power cannot relieve them, the Judge is neither to be aw'd nor brib'd; Submiſſion comes too late, and will not be taken; Interceſſion of Friends will be ineffectual; their only Mediator is their Judge. What will theſe Wretches do in this Extremity? Whither will they flee then from the Terrors, which now they ſo very hardly bear to be told of? When they are beſet round with Vengeance and Fear, without the leaſt glimpſe of Hope or Comfort left? Above, their angry God thundering upon them; Beneath, Hell opening its Mouth to ſwallow them up: On the one hand their Sins accuſing; on the other, the Devils ready to execute the Sentence of Torment upon them. Within, the Worm of Conſcience gnawing their very Heart-ſtrings: Without, damned Souls howling, and on every ſide, the whole World burning. O Bleſſed *Jeſus!* what a Caſe is this! How will the Sinner ſuſtain this Anguiſh, or what Courſe can he take? To go back is impoſſible; to move forward, is intolerable; to ſtand as he is, will not be allow'd. Death he ſhall wiſh for, but that flees from him; To the Mountains he ſhall cry, but they cannot cover him: No, no; ſtand there he muſt, in the preſence of this provoked God, of his abuſed Saviour; a deſperate, forlorn, miſerable Wretch; till He, whoſe Bowels were once ſo tender as to deſcend from Heaven, and die for him, ſhall now without any kind Relentings utter that dreadful and irreverſible Sentence, *Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting Fire.*

SECT. IV.

The Conſequence of the General Judgment.

THIS ſhall be the laſt Act of that diſmal Tragedy: A paricular Account whereof our Lord himſelf hath given in the xxv^th^ of St. *Matthew's* Goſpel, from the 31*ſt* Verſe to the End of that Chapter: The words themſelves are more generally known, than to need repeating; but I would put my Reader in mind upon this occaſion, That, among the Cauſes, for which the Wicked are there condemned to everlaſting Puniſhment, our Saviour does not alledge either Unbelief, or any enormons actual Sins, but only the Omiſſion of ſome good Deeds, and neglecting to extend their charitable Relief, when they had proper Objects, and fit Opportunities, and ſufficient Ability for it. And becauſe they came not up to this Point of Chriſtian Perfection, therefore they are deliver'd up to eternal Torments. But who can form to himſelf any juſt Idea of the different Reſentments, wherewith that Sentence will be entertained? The Saved rejoicing in Hymns of Praiſe to the Glory of their Saviour: The Damned bewailing, blaſpheming, and curſing the Hour they were born: The Angels extolling the Equity of the Sentence, which even they who ſuffer under it can find no exception againſt.

Think of the intolerable ſcoffs and reproaches of thoſe Infernal Spirits, who with a malicious inſolence ſhall upbraid and deride thoſe very Torments to which they have betray'd theſe Wretches: Who firſt make Souls their Prey, and then inſult over their Puniſhment for being ſo. Think of the eternal ſeparation which ſhall then be made between the deareſt Relations and moſt intimate Friends: Husbands and Wives, Fathers and Children, Kindred and Acquaintance; ſome to Happineſs, others to Miſer-

Miſery, without any hope of ſeeing or hearing of ne another any more: Nay, without ſo much as itying the calamitous Condition of thoſe we loved oſt tenderly in this World: Becauſe thoſe partial ondneſſes are all ſwallowed up in the Joy for God's lory; which ſhall then be our only moving Con-deration, and miniſter Delight, when this is mag-fied by the Execution of Juſtice, even upon thoſe, hom in this World, Relation, or Friendſhip, or y other Temporal Engagement, makes deareſt us. O my Soul! which art now taking a diſtant oſpect of theſe things, but ſhall then ſee them ſtinctly, and be preſent at them, what a Parting ll this be? What Heart would not break? but s! it cannot then break, and put an end to its iſery. Think, O ye Children of this World, at will then be the end of all your vain and ſen-l Delights, your glittering Pomp, and empty ſpects, your Riot and Laſciviouſneſs, your Flat-ers and pleaſant Companions? Theſe all forſake , when you need them moſt; and have left no t behind, but a bitter Remembrance for ever orment you. Alas, how poor a thing will ches and Honour, and worldly Grandeur ſeem at Hour? and how joyful will that Man be, who led an honeſt, painful, virtuous Life, and tra-ed to Heaven, though through the rougheſt s of Poverty, and Affliction, and Contempt? ll is it for that now ſeemingly wretched Man that he was born; well for him, that ever he was cted, and deſpis'd; ſo well, that none but can expreſs or conceive his Happineſs.

Let us then reflect how eaſy a matter it would be, void the dangers of this Diſmal Day; would we ſet about it ſpeedily, and in good earneſt. And s indeed is the very End, for which God hath aled the thing to us, that we may take warn-n time, provide Oyl in our Lamps, and be ready neet the Bridegroom at his coming. For thus

our Lord concludes his ſevere threatnings with friendly exhortations. *Take heed to your ſelves, Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. And what I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, Watch.* And in another place, *Take heed to your ſelves, that your Hearts be not overcharged with Surfeiting, and Drunkenneſs, and Cares of this Life, and ſo that day come upon you Unawares. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man.* To the ſame purpoſe St. Peter: *The day of the Lord ſhall come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens ſhall paſs away, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth alſo, and all the Works that are therein ſhall be burnt up. Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought we to be in all Holy Converſation and Godlineſs; Looking for, and haſting to the coming of the Day of God,* &c.

Mark xiii. 33, 37.

Luke xxi. 34, 36.

2 Pet. iii. 10, 11.

Now by this *Looking for, and haſting unto the Coming of the Day of God,* is meant living as becomes Men, who believe and expect ſuch a Day, examining into our preſent State, ſpeedy Amendment of Life, and attending to works of Piety and Charity, which is the Oyl in our Lamps, and the ſovereign Remedy of Souls, to which we may conveniently enough apply the Wiſe-man's Advice, *Phyſick or ever thou be ſick. Before Judgment examine thy ſelf, and in the Day of Viſitation thou ſhalt find Mercy.* Thus St. *Paul* tells us, that *if we would judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged of the Lord.* But becauſe ſo very few enter upon theſe Inquiries, and are careful to make a right Judgment of themſelves, what Poſture their Souls are in, what Evil they do, and what Good they neglect to do, hence it comes to paſs that ſo few eſcape the Dangers of that terrible Day. For few make any Preparation for it, few care to hear or think of this ungrateful Subject. The Advice of *Chriſt* and his Mini-

Eccluſ. xviii. 19, 20.

1 Cor. xi. 31.

Miniſters is turn'd into a Jeſt by the Prophane, and they who arrive not at this hardned Pitch of Wickedneſs, make but light of it; Watchfulneſs in our Spiritual Concerns is a Virtue, that but very rarely finds Proſelytes. *Eat and Drink, for to morrow we die,* is the common Voice of Mankind in the very worſt Senſe of the Words. Men will not be made ſenſible of their Caſe for fear it ſhould give them Diſturbance, and this affected Ignorance, this Spiritual Sleep renders their Deſtruction paſt all Remedy. God of his infinite Mercy awaken our ſtupid Souls, that we ſleep not in Death eternal, and grant us Grace, *to know in this our Day, the things that belong unto our Peace,* before that Day of his come, when they ſhall *be hidden from our Eyes*, or (which comes all to one) diſcerned, when it is too late to profit by the Sight of them.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Nature and Guilt of Sin.

AFTER this Explanation of that rigid Account to be taken of every Man at the laſt Day, I think my ſelf bound to obviate any miſtaken Apprehenſions which may ariſe from hence concerning the Severity of thoſe Proceedings, as if it exceeded the Nature and Quality of the Offence. This Chapter therefore is intended to ſhew what is the Reaſon, that God does upon all Occaſions expreſs ſuch irreconcilable Averſion to Sin and Sinners, and perſecute them with Indignation and Wrath implacable. For thus the Scriptures declare, That *God hates Iniquity*, that *he abhors them that work Wickedneſs:* that the *whole Life* of ſuch Men, their Thoughts, their Words, nay their very *Prayers* and *Sacrifices* are

Pſal. v. 6. Prov. xv. 9. Iſai. i. 15.

an Abomination to him; while they perſiſt in their ungodly Courſes. He forbids ſuch as *hate to be reformed, to take his Covenant in their Mouth*, or to praiſe his Name: And if ſuch be God's Reſentment againſt Sin here, we cannot think it ſtrange, that he ſhould deal ſo rigorouſly with it hereafter: For God is not mutable as we are; the Sinner may change his Ways, but God cannot change his Mind. The things he loves or hates he does ſo unto the End. And yet the Scriptures make it no leſs plain that he loves Mens Souls moſt tenderly, that he deſires not the Death of any Sinner, but would have them live and be ſaved; that is, by Repentance and Amendment, while the Seaſon of Reconciliation laſts. But then this admitting Men to Pardon and Salvation, upon no other Terms than a Change of Mind and Manners, ſhews plainly that his Averſion to the Sin it ſelf is fixt and unalterable; the Reaſonableneſs whereof may ſoon appear, to any who conſider what an undutifulneſs ſuch Men are guilty of, by tranſgreſſing his Commands wilfully, and ſetting light by that Authority that binds them upon our Conſciences. What monſtrous and baſe Ingratitude this is in Men, who daily receive innumerable, ineſtimable Benefits from that Giver of all good Gifts! Each of which Provocations are ſufficient to incur the utmoſt ſeverity againſt Them, who will neither ſtand in awe of infinite Majeſty, nor be won to better Courſes by infinite Mercy.

Pſal. l. 16, 17.

Ezek. xviii. 32. 1 Tim. ii. 4.

But there is one Reaſon above all the reſt, which goes to the very bottom of this Matter; and that is the horrible Injury we do Almighty God, and the Slight we put upon him in every Sin, wilfully committed by us. Which indeed is ſo great, that no petty Prince upon Earth would endure it at the Hands of any Subject; and much leſs can we think that the Lord of Glory, and the King of Kings will ſuffer an Outrage ſo often repeated as this, to pass unpuniſhed in his Vaſſals and Creatures. Now for

right understanding of this Case, we shall do well to observe, that in every deliberate Sin, though we do not attend to, nor are perhaps sensible of it, there passes in the Mind of the Transgressor, a certain Practical Discourse of the Man's Will and Judgment (as there does in every Instance of a free Choice) which proceeds in this Method. We lay before us, on one side, the Convenience of the Sin we are tempted to commit, the Pleasure or the Profit which invites us to it; And, on the other side, we set against this God's Displeasure, the Loss of his Grace and Favour, if we comply with such Temptation. Thus poising, as it were, the Matter under debate, with God in one Scale, and the Advantage we propose by offending in the other, we stand doubtful for a while, which of these ought to be preferred; but when we comply, and sin, we cast the Scale on that side, chuse the Pleasure, and reject Almighty God; declare in effect, that we are content to stand to all Hazards, and rather will lose the Favour and Grace of our Maker and Redeemer, than forego the Satisfaction of committing that Sin. Now what can be more Reproachful, what more Intolerable, than to set a vile Pleasure above the infinite Majesty and Goodness of God? Is not this less excusable, than the Dishonour offered *Jesus* by the *Jews*, when they chose *Barabbas* a *Robber* and Murtherer, and *crucified the Lord of Life and Glory?* No doubt, however we may think of the Matter, the Sinner hath less to pledge for his own Perverseness, than the very worst of those *Jews*. They knew not the Value and Dignity of the Person refused by them, for had they known him, St. *Peter* bears them Witness they would not have done it; but the Sinner knows this, and yet does it. They rejected *Jesus* once, but he does often, daily and hourly, even as oft as any Temptation offers, and he yields up his Consent to it. And this Consideration be duly weighed, it is no wonder that God should revenge this Dishonour severely, that

he ſhould give Men up to the Damnation they have choſen, and not to be reconciled to thoſe, who, all their Life long, have treated him after ſo unworthy and contemptuous a manner.

But beſides, there is likewiſe in every hardned and habitual Ofiender, an inveterate Malice againſt God: He does not only Affront and Deſpiſe, but he hates this Majeſty on high. If it lay in his power he would pluck him out of his Throne, and as it is, he wiſhes in his Heart, that there were no ſuch Power in being to Obſerve and Puniſh him.

This at firſt View perhaps may ſeem a heavy Charge, but it is the very Truth of the Caſe, and does not really over-ſtrain the point at all. For, let any reſolute Sinner ſearch his Conſcience to the bottom, and then tell me, whether the thoughts of a Judge and an Avenger, be not ſo uneaſy to him, that if he could diſpoſe matters according to his own Will there ſhould be no Immortality of the Soul, no Reckoning or Recompence after this Life, no Hell, no God at all; but theſe ſhould all be ſacrificed to his own wicked Luſts, and the ſecure enjoyment of his guilty Pleaſures. Now, becauſe God is a ſearcher of the heart and reins, and ſees clearly all that lurking Treachery and Malice, which others very often, and the Man himſelf ſometimes does not diſcern; therefore he looks upon ſinners as his declared Enemies and profeſſes open War with thoſe, who, by the principles of their own Actions, act in Hoſtility againſt him. And what, can we think, muſt become of thoſe Worms of the Earth, when they have thus enraged ſo powerful an Adverſary; when they have wearied out his forbearance, and extinguiſhed all the relentings of pity toward them? For thus God deſcribes himſelf, ruſhing upon Sinners with a thirſt of revenge, and taking delight in their deſtruction; *The*

Iſa. i. 24. *ſaith the Lord, the Lord of Hoſts, the mighty one of Iſrael, Aha! I will eaſe me of mine Adverſaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.* Thus St. *Paul* calls the Impenitent

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Veſſels of Wrath, fitted for Deſtruction. And *David* complains, *that the Unwiſe will not conſider this, neither will the Fool underſtand it; that when the Ungodly are green as the Graſs, and all the Workers of Wickedneſs do flouriſh, it is that they ſhould be deſtroyed for ever.* The ſhort Proſperity they boaſt in here ſhews that they are reſerved to endleſs Miſeries hereafter. It muſt be ſo, for *Lo thine Enemies, O Lord! lo thine Enemies ſhall periſh, and all the workers of Iniquity ſhall be confounded.* And Thus we ſee both the irreconciliable Enmity between God and Sinners, and the Ground of that Enmity. Rom. ix. 22. Pſal. xcii. 7, 9.

But, for the farther Juſtification of this Severity, let us conſider farther the meaſure of this Hatred againſt Sin; what Bounds there are to limit it, or rather indeed, whether it be not infinite, and ſubject to no Limitation at all. For in truth the largeſt Underſtanding cannot comprehend the greatneſs of God's Diſpleaſure in this Caſe againſt every mortal and wilful Sin. The Reaſon whereof is Twofold.

Firſt, The incomprehenſible Holineſs and Purity of God; for, in Proportion as he is better than We, his Averſion to all Wickedneſs muſt riſe above ours. Conſequently, a Being infinitely Good muſt love Goodneſs, and hate Evil to an infinite degree: Conſequently, the Rewards of Goodneſs, and the Puniſhment of Evil muſt be infinite and everlaſting: becauſe he can never ceaſe to love the one, and to hate the other.

Secondly, The greatneſs of any Offence is aggravated, in proportion to the Party againſt whom it is committed. The ſame Affront, or Blow, to a Peaſant, or a Slave, and to a Prince, differ as much as the Quality and Character of theſe Perſons differ; and the Puniſhment deſerved by it riſes, as the Crime riſes. Now, ſince every deliberate Sin is a wilful Diſhonour and Offence to God, whoſe Majeſty is infinite, the Guilt of every ſuch Sin is infinite, and incurs

curs infinite Hatred and Puniſhment at God's Hands. This ſeems to juſtifiy thoſe, otherwiſe ſeemingly unaccountable Diſpenſations, of the irreverſible Damnation of the fallen Angels, for one ſingle Act of Rebellion; of the rigorous Puniſhment of our firſt Parents Diſobedience, by which not only the Offenders themſelves were chaſtiſed, but the Ground curſed for their ſakes; the Guilt of their Crime tranſmitted to all their Poſterity; the wretched Effects of it, as temporal Afflictions, and Sorrow, and Death, entail'd upon all Mankind (of whom they were the common Source and Repreſentatives) to the end of the World; of the Satisfaction required by the Divine Juſtice for Sin, which would not be appeaſed upon eaſier Terms, than thoſe of God's own, and the only begotten Son, taking our Fleſh upon him, and in it ſuffering a moſt painful and ignominious Death; and ſo becoming our common Repreſentative in the Expiation, as our firſt Parents had been in the Tranſgreſſion. For, though the leaſt of his Sufferings were of infinite Value, by Virtue of his Divine united to our human Nature; yet God ceaſed not to lay Affliction upon Affliction, he ſpared him not when bathed in Blood and Water, he heard him in the Agony and Anguiſh of his Soul inexpreſſible, beſeeching, that *If it were poſſible the Cup might paſs from him*; he heard his doleful Exclamation upon the Croſs, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* And yet notwithſtanding thoſe ſtrong Cries and Tears, he would not deliver him; but added one Stripe to another, one Pain and Torment to another, till he had breathed his Soul out, and died under the intolerable Burthen. And all this to teſtify his hatred againſt Sin; and to be a warning, that He, who ſpared not his innocent and beloved Son, when ſtanding in the place of Sinners, will not ſpare thoſe Sinners themſelves, if they remain obdurate, and will not ſubmit to be reclaimed.

Mat. xxvi. Luke xxii. Mat xxvii. Iſa. liii.

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Upon the ſame account it is, that we read ſo many diſmal Threatnings, and aſtoniſhing Relations of God's dealing with Sinners; *Upon the ungodly God ſhall rain Snares, Fire and Brimſtone, Storm and Tempeſt. This ſhall be their Portion to drink. Great Plagues belong to the Ungodly. Death and Bloodſhed, Strife and Sword, Calamities, Famine, Tribulation and the Scourge, Theſe Things are created for the Wicked. Sinners ſhall be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God. Unto them that do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteouſneſs; Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil.* Theſe, and infinite other denunciations of Vengeance may give us a Notion of the Sinner's deplorable Circumſtances, and the unſpeakable Hatred of God againſt him, while he perſiſts in his ungodly Courſes. From all which Conſiderations we cannot but infer with the Wiſe Man, that *he that ſinneth is an Enemy to his own Soul*; and that ſince ſuch are of the Devil, their Portion will not fail to be in Miſery, with thoſe Devils and Damned Spirits, which they take ſuch perverſe Delight to reſemble, in their Works and Diſpoſitions, during this preſent Life.

Pſal. xi. 7. Pſal. xxxii. 11. Rom. ii. 8, 9.

And is not all this ſufficient to beget in us a due Deteſtation of Sin, and make us afraid ever to commit it? Will not theſe Threatnings ſhake the ſtouteſt Heart? What deſperate obſtinacy is this, to go on in the Way of Deſtruction, without Remorſe, or Scruple, or Conſideration where ſuch Practices will end? And yet we find too many, ſuch as *David* deſcribes, who, *like the deaf Adder ſtop their Ears, and refuſe to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely*; Men, upon whom no Methods uſed for their Amendment make any Impreſſion at all. The inward Motions of God's Spirit they ſtifle and ſuppreſs, the Remorſe of their own Conſciences they ſilence, the threatnings of Puniſhment they deſpiſe, the Admonitions and Examples of Good Men they regard

Pſal. lviii. 4, 5.

regard not, and the Exemplary Vengeance upon others they take no warning by: And yet the Misery they draw upon their own Heads by this way of living is so great, that were Matters rightly considered, a Man would not commit one wilful Sin, to gain Ten Thousand Worlds. For what can be a tolerable Compensation for the forfeiture of that Grace, by which alone we are enabled to do or think any Thing that is Good? What can repair the loss of God's Love, and Protection, and fatherly Care, by this Means turned into profest Enmity? What amends can be made us for that Inheritance of a Glorious and Eternal Kingdom in Heaven, to which by deliberately offending our Father there, we cut off all Title and Claim? What sensual Pleasure is to be compared to that inward Peace, and sweet Consolation, with which a good Conscience chears the Spirits of the Just? What madness is it to enslave our selves to our Mortal Enemy, to make that Soul, which was once the Temple of the Holy Ghost, a Den of Dragons, a Dungeon of Devils, a Sink of Filth and noisome Abominations, and for ever a Companion of the Damned in exquisite Torments? *Lastly*, who in his Senses would abandon the Saviour that died for him, renounce all Interest in those Sufferings, which alone can make him happy, trample under Foot the precious Blood of the Son of God, and, as much as in him lies, Crucify afresh and Persecute his Redeemer? And yet This is the Guilt, this the Misery, of all backsliding Christians; of whom St. *Peter* truly says, *That it had been better for such not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them.*

2 Pet. ii. 21.

Let wanton Worldlings then solace themselves never so much in their Vanities, and soften their Wicked Actions by trifling Excuses: Let them call their Pride, Good Breeding; their Intemperance, Good Fellowship; their Anger and Revenge, Honour;

nour and Courage; their Laſciviouſneſs, obeying Nature; yet ſhall they one Day to their Sorrow find how thin a Shelter all theſe Pretences are: They ſhall be made ſenſible to their Coſt, that God is not to be jeſted with, and all their Drolleries upon Him and Religion, which now make them wicked Diverſion, ſhall then be recanted too late, and ſeverely accounted for. They will then wiſh in vain, that thoſe Warnings of the Apoſtle had found an early Paſſage to their Hearts; *He that deſpiſed* Moſes's *Law died without Mercy; of how much ſorer Puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy Thing, and hath done Deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace?* And again, *If God ſpared not the Angels that ſinned, bnt caſt them down to Hell, and delivered them into Chains of Darkneſs, to be reſerved unto Judgment; And ſpared not the old World, but brought in a Flood upon the World of the Ungodly; And turned the Cities of* Sodom *and* Gomorrah *into Aſhes, condemning them with an Overthrow, making them an Enſample to thoſe that after ſhould live Ungodly; The Lord knoweth how to reſerve the Unjuſt unto the Day of Judgment to be puniſhed.* And this indeed is the proper Way of Reaſoning: For, Why ſhould not every Man draw theſe Conſequences to himſelf! If the Angels, Creatures of ſo much more Excellence and Power than Man, if *Adam* in Paradiſe, if all the other Inſtances we read of, paid ſo dear for ſome ſingle Sin, what am I to expect, who have been guilty of ſo many? If God hath born longer with Me, than with ſome others, what a ſad Account have I to make, if his long ſuffering do not lead me to Repentance? If *David* and other Holy Perſons afflicted themſelves ſo ſore, for Forgiveneſs of their Sins, what Puniſhment will remain for me, if my Sins ſo grievous, ſo numerous, be not forgiven? If our Lord hath told us true, that the way to Heaven is ſtrait, and

Heb i. 28, 29.

2 Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6, 9.

and the Gate that leads to Life narrow; and that Men shall give Account for every idle Word, What shall become of Me if I take my Ease, and pursue the Pleasures of Sense, and am so far from observing my Words, that I seldom enquire into my Actions? If the Righteous be sav'd with Difficulty, where shall I appear, or how shall I be able to stand in that dreadful Day, who am so miserably Worldly and Wicked?

Such Expostulations as these would prove of mighty Benefit, if we would argue our selves by them into a just Dread of God's severe Judgments, and not flatter or deceive our own Souls. For want of these it is chiefly, that the blackest and most enormous Vices are indulged. Men have not God before their Eyes, and therefore they cherish themselves in Wickedness. And the Virtue of *David* is by himself ascribed to this, that *All God's Judgments were* constantly *before him, and therefore he kept the Ways of the Lord, and did not depart from his God, as the Wicked do.* No wonder then, if the Fear of God, which produces such excellent Effects, be termed the beginning of Religious Wisdom; No wonder if the Prophet beg of God throughly to possess his Heart with this Principle, the most powerful Check to all Evil, and the fruitful Source of all Holy Dispositions. St. *Paul*, after declaring to the *Corinthians*, *That we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, there to Receive according to the Things done in our Body*, proceeds, *Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we persuade Men.* And St. *Peter*, after describing the Holiness and Majesty of God, adviseth thus, *If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of Persons judgeth according to every Man's Work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* A necessary Admonition, no doubt, to all, but especially to those, who by their sinful Practices have provoked the Divine Displeasure, and rendred themselves obnoxious to the severity of his Justice. For if once they fall finally

Psal. xviii. 21, 22.

Psal. cxi. 10.

2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

1 Pet. i. 17.

finally, or die in that State, there remains no more Remedy for their Sin and Misery. And what Wise Man then would not fear exceedingly? Who would suffer himself to Eat, and Drink, and be Merry, till he had discharged his Soul of that heavy Burthen, and made Peace between God and his Conscience? How dangerous is his Condition till this be done? How many Ways may he fall into the Hands of that God, who *is a consuming Fire?* A Tile from a House, as he walks the Streets; a Slip of a Horse, as he travels upon the Road; the Assault of an Enemy, or a Robber that he thinks not of; a Cold, or a Surfeit, or any other Distemper; or any one Accident of a Million that may befall him, may bereave him of this Life, and hurry him in a Moment into everlasting Flames. And is not this then a State to be dreaded? Is not this a Danger that requires our utmost Care to prevent? Most true certainly is that of the Wiseman, *Happy is the Man that feareth alway; but he that hardneth his Heart shall fall into Mischief.* Heb. xii. 29. Prov. xxviii. 14.

"Lord, of thy Mercy, Grant us Grace to fear thee as we ought; and so to consider thy Justice and Judgments, that we may answer the End of all thy Threatnings: That so we may avoid Sin, and not delay our Repentance, but set about thy Service, whilst thou art content to accept us. Pardon, O Lord, our past Offences, and strengthen our Resolutions of better Obedience for the time to come; that we may not put off this necessary Work, till the Door be shut against us. nor suffer those precious Opportunities to slip through our Hands; which, when once lost, can never be retriev'd. O help us to see, and seriously to consider the things that belong to our Peace, before thou, provoked by our wicked Delays, give us up to a Spirit of Delusion and Impenitence, and hide them eternally from our Eyes.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX. SECT. I.

Some other Aggravations of Sin, particularly the Majeſty of God, and the Benefits we receive from Him.

THough the much greater part of Chriſtians do not, it is to be feared, arrive at *David's* Perfection of placing *all their delight in God's Commandments*, which would yet be the certain effect of a virtuous Life, and a good Conſcience; yet is it fit that all ſhould make that Confeſſion at leaſt, Pſal. cxix. 137. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and juſt are thy Judgments.* For which reaſon I ſhall enlarge a little more upon the Greatneſs of our Offence, in ſinning againſt our God; and vindicate his Juſtice in avenging it ſo terribly (as you have heard) when we do ſo.

It hath been already obſerved, That every Crime is more grievous, as the Perſon injured by it is greater, and the Party tranſgreſſing is more mean and vile. To which purpoſe we find the Laws of God uſhered in by ſuch Prefaces as theſe: *I am the* Gen. xvii. 1. *Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect. Heaven is my Throne, and Earth is my Footſtool.* And again, *Be not ſtiff-necked, for the Lord your God is God* Iſa. lxvi. 1. Deut. x. 17. *of Gods, and Lord of Lords; a great God, a Mighty and a terrible, who regardeth not perſons, nor taketh reward.* Conſider then what an infinite Majeſty, Thou poor Worm of the Earth, haſt ſo often and ſo contemptuouſly offended, and tremble at thy Preſumption. We ſee none ſo bold, as openly to affront an Earthly Prince, at leaſt in his own Preſence. But what are all the Princes of the Earth, to the thouſandth part of God's incomprehenſible Majeſty; who with one word made Heaven and Earth, and every Creature, and can with the ſame Eaſe deſtroy and command all theſe back into nothing again! Who

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Beck the Powers of Heaven and Earth obey, and at whoſe Frown the very Pillars that ſuſtain this vaſt Frame, ſhake and tremble. The Sinner is the only Creature that dares to harden himſelf in oppoſition to this Univerſal Monarch; and every time he commits a wilful Sin, he does defy this Glorious Majeſty, and withſtand him to the Face: A Majeſty ſo tranſcendently great, that no mortal Eye can ſee him; before *whom Hell is naked*, and the *Power of whoſe Thunder none can underſtand.* Job xxvi. 6, 14.

Imagine then this King ſitting on his Throne, cloathed with Light inacceſſible, and encompaſs'd with millions of Angels, and Chariots of flaming Fire. Imagine, that thou ſeeſt all Creatures trembling at his Preſence, and moſt obſequiouſly attending to the reſpective Offices aſſigned them to diſcharge. Imagine again, that thou ſeeſt all theſe entirely depending upon his Pleaſure, acting and ſubſiſting only by that Virtue, which ſtreams out perpetually from this Fountain of all Life and Power; this glorious and reſplendent Sun, whoſe Beams warm the greateſt Angel and the leaſt Spire of Graſs, the higheſt and the loweſt Beings, into Exiſtence and Activity; and think thou ſeeſt all theſe drooping, dying, vaniſhing to nothing, if He, but for one moment think fit to withdraw his enliv'ning and ſuſtaining Influence. This will give thee ſome, but even all this will not give thee a worthy and adequate Idea of the Divine Majeſty; of the Univerſal Homage and Dread paid to him, which the preſumptuous Sinner is the only exception upon Earth. But yet this may ſuffice to abate any wonder at the ſevere Vengeance reſerved for this example Rebel. For how unaccountably do we deal with that terrible Majeſty, when the Awe of him will not reſtrain us, ſo much as the Preſence of the meaneſt of our Brethren upon Earth? When we *are afraid of a Man that ſhall die, and the Son of Man who ſhall be made as graſs, and forget the Lord our Maker?* This is ſuch an Abſurdity in Behaviour,

as ſtrikes at the very Root of all Religion, and accordingly is by God himſelf charg'd upon the *Jews*, as a plain Evidence of their Unbelief. For ſo the Prophet is order'd to reprove them: *Hear now this, O fooliſh People and without underſtanding, which have Eyes and ſee not, which have Ears and hear not. Fear ye not me, ſaith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my preſence, which have placed the Sand for a bound of the Sea, by a perpetual Decree, that it cannot paſs it: and though the waves thereof toſs themſelves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not paſs over it? But this People hath a faithleſs and rebellious Heart.* And *David* aſſigns this, as the Reaſon why fooliſh Men were become *corrupt and abominable in their wickedneſs, that they ſaid in their Hearts, There is no God.* So that, thus far at leaſt, this horrid depravation of Manners and Security in ſinning, proceeds from want of Faith, that ſuch Men do not conſider God as he is. For had they lively and vigorous Ideas of that Holy, that Powerful, that Terrible Majeſty, which the Scriptures deſcribe him to be, they could not poſſibly break looſe from the reſtraints of theſe Impreſſions, but muſt of neceſſity fear to offend and provoke him.

Jer. v. 21, &c.

Pſal xiv. and liii.

SECT. II.

Of the Benefits we receive from Almighty God.

THIS Conſideration, added to the Former, will be an exceeding Aggravation of our Wickedneſs. To injure them that do us Good is ſo deteſtable, ſo monſtrouſly unnatural, that the very fierceſt of Brutes are won by Kindneſs, and much more reaſonable Creatures find themſelves charmed by it, eſpecially if it come from Great Perſons, the Honour and Advantage of whoſe Favour renders Gifts otherwiſe very ſmall, infinitely obliging to the Re-

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ceivers. And therefore every Chriſtian, upon this occaſion will do well to reflect, what he hath received at the bountiful Hands of the Great God. All which was given, with a Deſign of engaging Men to live well, and ſerve him faithfully. And though no Tongue can expreſs the half of thoſe Gifts we have all received, nor eſtimate them according to their juſt Value; nor conceive the Greatneſs of the Love that beſtowed them; yet for the refreſhment of my Reader's Memory, and exciting him the more effectually to Gratitude, I will juſt name ſome general Topicks, taken from the principal and moſt viſible Inſtances of God's Goodneſs, to which the reſt may be referred as they occur to each Perſon's Remembrance.

Firſt then, Conſider the Benefit of thy Creation: That God framed thee out of nothing, into the likeneſs of himſelf; that he intended thee for the nobleſt purpoſe, to ſerve him in this, and to reign with him in the next Life: And that, for the attainment of theſe glorious Ends, he hath made his other Creatures thy Subjects and Servants. If this Reflection affect thee but coldly, quicken it with an Imagination, that any one part of thy Body, or any one of thy Senſes were wanting: What Notion wouldſt thou have of thy Friend's Kindneſs, if he could help thee to a Leg, or an Arm, or an Eye? How wouldſt thou eſteem thy ſelf beholden to One, who reſtored thy Hearing, when Deaf; thy Speech, when Dumb; thy Sight, when Blind? And if the giving any one of theſe muſt needs be taken for an Eternal Obligation, learn from hence to value the miraculous Bounty of that Maker and Preſerver, who hath beſtowed, and for ſo many years together continued all theſe ſeveral Parts and Powers; and the many more, of which thou art compounded, in their free Uſe and full Perfection.

Conſider again, that he hath made thee in the reſemblance of no leſs an Excellence than himſelf; that the Service he requires from thee at preſent is both

as ſtrikes at the very Root of all Religion, and accordingly is by God himſelf charg'd upon the *Jews*, as a plain Evidence of their Unbelief. For ſo the Prophet is order'd to reprove them: *Hear now this, O fooliſh People and without underſtanding, which have Eyes and ſee not, which have Ears and hear not. Fear ye not me, ſaith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my preſence, which have placed the Sand for a bound of the Sea, by a perpetual Decree, that it cannot paſs it; and though the waves thereof toſs themſelves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not paſs over it? But this People hath a faithleſs and rebellious Heart.* And *David* aſſigns this, as the Reaſon why fooliſh Men were become *corrupt and abominable in their wickedneſs, that they ſaid in their Hearts, There is no God.* So that, thus far at leaſt, this horrid depravation of Manners and Security in ſinning, proceeds from want of Faith, that ſuch Men do not conſider God as he is. For had they lively and vigorous Ideas of that Holy, that Powerful, that Terrible Majeſty, which the Scriptures deſcribe him to be, they could not poſſibly break looſe from the reſtraints of theſe Impreſſions, but muſt of neceſſity fear to offend and provoke him.

Jer. v. 21, &c.

Pſal xiv. and liii.

SECT. II.

Of the Benefits we receive from Almighty God.

THIS Conſideration, added to the Former, will be an exceeding Aggravation of our Wickedneſs. To injure them that do us Good is ſo deteſtable, ſo monſtrouſly unnatural, that the very fierceſt of Brutes are won by Kindneſs, and much more reaſonable Creatures find themſelves charmed by it, eſpecially if it come from Great Perſons, the Honour and Advantage of whoſe Favour renders Gifts otherwiſe very ſmall, infinitely obliging to the Re-

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ceivers. And therefore every Chriſtian, upon this occaſion will do well to reflect, what he hath received at the bountiful Hands of the Great God. All which was given, with a Deſign of engaging Men o live well, and ſerve him faithfully. And though o Tongue can expreſs the half of thoſe Gifts we ave all received, nor eſtimate them according to heir juſt Value; nor conceive the Greatneſs of the Love that beſtowed them; yet for the refreſhment f my Reader's Memory, and exciting him the more ffectually to Gratitude, I will juſt name ſome geeral Topicks, taken from the principal and moſt iſible Inſtances of God's Goodneſs, to which the eſt may be referred as they occur to each Perſon's Remembrance.

Firſt then, Conſider the Benefit of thy Creation: hat God framed thee out of nothing, into the likeeſs of himſelf; that he intended thee for the nobleſt urpoſe, to ſerve him in this, and to reign with him the next Life: And that, for the attainment of theſe orious Ends, he hath made his other Creatures thy ubjects and Servants. If this Reflection affect thee t coldly, quicken it with an Imagination, that any ne part of thy Body, or any one of thy Senſes were anting: What Notion wouldſt thou have of thy riend's Kindneſs, if he could help thee to a Leg, or Arm, or an Eye? How wouldſt thou eſteem thy f beholden to One, who reſtored thy Hearing, hen Deaf; thy Speech, when Dumb; thy Sight, hen Blind? And if the giving any one of theſe muſt eds be taken for an Eternal Obligation, learn from nce to value the miraculous Bounty of that Maker d Preſerver, who hath beſtowed, and for ſo many ears together continued all theſe ſeveral Parts and wers; and the many more, of which thou art comunded, in their free Uſe and full Perfection.

Conſider again, that he hath made thee in the reblance of no leſs an Excellence than himſelf; that Service he requires from thee at preſent is both

honourable and advantagious; and that the Crown laid up for thoſe who ſerve him faithfully ſhall laſt to all Eternity; And what is Earth and Aſhes, that this ſhould be admitted to reign with God in Glory? Who can conceive the boundleſs Ocean of that Love, which makes us capable of ſuch vaſt Advantages, and hath prepared for us the utmoſt Happineſs we are capable of? Conſider once more, what a magnificent World is contrived for thy Uſe and Service; the Heavens give thee Light; the Earth, and Air, and Water furniſh unſpeakable variety of Creatures for thy Suſtenance and Delight; Thus hath he furniſh'd thy Dwelling richly, and all, to aſſiſt thee in his Service, or to render that Service pleaſant and eaſy, by their Comforts. And now I appeal to thy own Conſcience, whether it be not moſt unpardonable Ingratitude, to abuſe the Kindneſs which hath beſtowed ſo numerous, ſo noble Gifts upon thee and what can be too bad for thoſe, who make theſe very Creatures Inſtruments of Injury and Diſhonour to their and our common Maſter and Maker, which his Liberality gave on purpoſe, to encourage Men in his Service, and for promoting his own Glory?

2. But happier were it for us never to have been created, if this good God had not added the Second and bettter Benefit of our Redemption. For by this we regain all thoſe former Advantages, which Sin had forfeited and loſt; We are ſaved from that Eternal Deſtruction, to which that had made us liable; our Faults are expiated by the moſt aſtoniſhng Satisfaction of the Blood of God, and our Ranſom paid by his bitter and opprobrious Death upon the Cross. Bleſſed *Jeſus!* who can worthily comprehend this inestimable Goodneſs, this moſt amazing Condeſcenſion! Suppoſe then, Chriſtian Reader, that a poor Slave had, in combination with ſome of the chief Nobility, committed horrible Crimes againſt his Prince; but he had repeated thoſe Crimes often, they offended but once. When theſe Offenders were all convicted

and ready to ſuffer for their Faults, ſuppoſe this mighty King delivering up his Nobles to Juſtice, but diſpoſed to Save and Pardon that deſpicable Slave; Nay, to do Honour to his Laws, laying all the Penalty, the Shame, the Torments, due to this Wretch upon his only Son, and the Heir of all his Kingdoms. What ſort of Reſentment muſt ſuch a ſtrange extending of Mercy create? But if that Son, refuſing to intercede for thoſe Peers, ſhould, not only accept moſt chearfully, but earneſtly intreat, that all the Diſgrace and Puniſhment due to this wretched Slave, might be laid upon himſelf; ſhould voluntarily die to attone for his Offences, nay, to exalt him to a Part in his own Honour, to make him *Heir* to his Father, and *Co-heir* with himſelf; is it poſſible, were this thy own Caſe, to conceive, how thou wouldſt love and ſerve ſuch a Beneſactor ever after? Could any thing, after this unſpeakable Grace, tempt thee willingly to diſpleaſe ſo kind a Lord? And yet this is thy Caſe; nay, it is infinitely leſs engaging than thine. Thy Redemption is a greater Mercy than any temporal Deliverance; the Kindneſs and Condeſcenſion of the Son of God infinitely greater, than that of the greateſt Emperor upon Earth could poſſibly be; yet is this forgotten; yet is this by many thought not worth remembring; yet is his Saviour injured and offended daily. So eaſy is the Application to our ſelves; ſo monſtrous is the ingratitude of every Sinner.

3. Let us, in the next Place, lay to Heart the mighty Benefit of our Chriſtian *Vocation*, by which I mean that infinite Mercy of God, whereby we are called out of the Darkneſs of Ignorance and Infidelity, to the Knowledge and Light of the Goſpel; which makes us actual Partakers, and conveys to us full right to the Advantages of this Redemption. Now the Caſe with Infidels is far otherwiſe; for, though *Chriſt* have paid down a Ranſom for all Mankind in general, yet are not all within the ordinary

Conditions of obtaining it; but ſuch only as it beſt pleaſes his Divine Goodneſs to Inſtruct in his Goſpel, and make the means on Man's Part knowable and practicable to them.

4. After which Mercy of calling Men to the Truth, upon their ſincere Acceptance and Obedience, there follows another Inſtance of the Divine Goodneſs, which is the *Juſtification* of Believers. By this they are releaſed from the Guilt and Penalty of all their paſt Sins: they are ſtrengthen'd and enrich'd with Acceſſions of Divine Grace, they grow in all Virtues neceſſary for their Practice; they are grounded in Faith, and Hope, and Charity; made Righteous in God's Sight, and entitled to his Heavenly Kingdom. So that, if a Man look at his own Private Advantage, this is more deſirable than even the two former Mercies. For, what would it profit us to be Created and Redeemed, if we be not called and admitted to Partake of that Redemption? Or, what would the Knowledge and Capacity of this Salvation avail, if God's free Mercy and Grace did not juſtify and adopt us for his own? So that theſe are the Completion of the former, becauſe they finiſh the Work begun in them, and bring the Matter home to our own actual and particular Advantage.

5. There are, beſides theſe, infinite other more valuable Privileges, peculiar to the true Friends and Children of God: Among which we muſt not fail to reckon the bleſſed Sacraments of our Religion, left by our Bleſſed Lord for our mighty Benefit and Comfort; the one to let us in, the other to preſerve and ſuſtain us when we are incorporated into his Church. Theſe are the ſure Pledges of his Love, the lively Signs and Memorials of his Death, the ſacred Pipes, through which God infuſes his Grace into our Souls. The firſt cleanſes us from Sin, and knits us to *Chriſt*, as Members of his Myſtical Body, waſhed in the Water of Regeneration, and made meet

this new Birth for the Kingdom of God. The other conveys to us the moſt precious Food of his own Fleſh and Blood, Remiſſion of our Sins after Baptiſm, and all other Benefits of his Paſſion. This ſtrengthens and ſuſtains us, repairs our Spiritual Decays, and fills us with Joy and Peace in believing, and unites us in the ſtricteſt ties of Friendſhip, and Union, and Chriſtian Charity. Theſe are Jewels of ſo great Price, means of ſuch ſingular Efficacy, that the Worldly and carnal cannot underſtand them; but they, whoſe Knowledge and Experience hath thus far enlightned them, think no Treaſures upon Earth comparable to them. And thoſe wretched People, who through Neglect, or for any Temporal Conſideration, deprive their Souls of theſe unſpeakable Advantages, are greatly to be blamed, greatly to be pitied; for this Loſs, if not repaired in time, will be everlaſting and irrecoverable.

6. Let us reflect yet farther, what infinite Dangers the good Providence of God hath preſerved us from which others have fallen into; and which, if not plucked back by his Hand, we were ruſhing into our ſelves. The Spiritual Dangers, I mean, and thoſe Snares of eternal Damnation, which nothing but his Protection and preventing Grace, could ever have defeated. Or, if we have been overtaken and fallen foully, yet hath he not ſuffered us to be ſurpriſed with Death and Judgment, nor ſnatched us away in the midſt of our Sins, which hath been the caſe of many Thouſands now in endleſs Torments, and thoſe ſuch, as we can give our ſelves no account why our Souls ſhould be more precious in the ſight of God, than theirs. To this we may add all the ſecret Motions and Methods of inciting us to do well; whereby God hath either knocked inwardly at the door of our Hears, by inſpiring good Deſires; or warned us outwardly, by the Means and Miniſtry of others; ſuch as good Sermons, good Books, the advice of our Friends, the Reproaches of our Ene-

mies, the virtuous Examples of the Godly, and the terrible Aflictions and ſad Ends of the Profligate and Wicked. All which are of Uſe, and were intended for the Advantage of our Souls, to draw us to a Love of himſelf, to engage us irrevocably in his Service, to beget in us a due Deteſtation of Vice, and to exalt us at the laſt to his holy and heavenly Kingdom.

Beſides theſe, the many temporal Bleſſings of Health, Friends, Reputation, competent Proviſion, or the like, which every Man's own Circumſtances make peculiar to himſelf, we ſhall do well to recollect as we can. And though the Sum be infinite, yet theſe Benefits do not more require a grateful return upon the Account of their Number, than they do with regard to their ineſtimable Value conſidered in themſelves; to the boundleſs Love and Liberality of the Giver, and the vileneſs of the Receiver in compariſon to his glorious Majeſty. Theſe ought all to excite in us vehement Affections, and Deſires to appear ſenſible how much we owe to this Benefactor; by ſerving him unfeignedly, and preferring his Favour before all worldly Conſiderations whatſoever. But, if we cannot bring ourſelves thus far neither, yet the leaſt we can poſſibly do, is to reſolve that we will not any more affront and do deſpight, by the inſolence of a wicked Life, to Him, who hath thus manifeſted to us the Riches of his Goodneſs, and loved us with ſo beneficial, ſo wonderful a Love. The lewdeſt Lord upon Earth, if he gave one of his Cottagers a Farm of five or ten Pounds Yearly Rent, would exclaim upon that Tenant for a Beaſt of a Fellow, if he were not at his Service all his Life after: But, if inſtead of ſerving, he ſhould wilfully give him offence; if he ſhould take Part againſt him, and ſtrike up a moſt intimate Friendſhip with his profeſt Enemy, how would this Man of Honour reſent ſuch baſe Uſage? And yet, I muſt make bold

to tell his Lordſhip, that as little as he makes of the Matter, his Behaviour is ten thouſand times more brutiſh and baſe to Almighty God. He hath received from that Hand more than Ten Thouſand-fold, above what any one Man can contribute to the Advantage of any other Man. For what hath he indeed, which he hath not received from thence? The Bread he eats, the Ground he treads on, the Land he falſly calls his own, the Light he walks and acts by, the Air he draws in; in a word, all the Comforts and Advantages both of Body and Mind, nay that very Mind it ſelf, and all its noble Faculties, each of which, how miſerably ſoever neglected, is of more Value than Ten Thouſand Bodies. And a moſt prodigious Thing it is, that any who write *Man*, and pretend to Reaſon at all, ſhould not conſider, and be ſenſible of its Worth. No wonder, after all this, if God complain in ſo pathetical a Manner in Scripture, of this abominable Ingratitude; if he ſummon all the Creatures together, to behold and ſtand amazed at it, and upbraid Men with thoſe better Examples, ſet them by the Beaſts themſelves. And thus we find him doing in the moſt moving and affectionate Terms imaginable. *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth:* i. e. be aſtoniſhed at this incredible Impiety; *I have nouriſhed and brought up Children, and they have rebelled againſt me. The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib; but* Iſrael *doth not know, my People doth not conſider, Ah! ſinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-doers; they have forſaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy One of* Iſrael *to Anger.* Iſai i. 2, 3, 4.

If then, my Friends, there be any remains of Grace or common Ingenuity in us, let us forbear to offend him, who hath been ſo unſpeakably kind to us; let us ceaſe at laſt to render Evil for Good, Hatred for Affection, Contempt for this more than Fatherly Care over us. He hath done for us the utmoſt

moſt that even Almighty Power could do: He hath given us as much as our Condition is capable of receiving; nay, he hath imparted to us his very ſelf. He hath ſtill great and ineſtimable Benefits in reſerve for us; even the Treaſures and Glory of the Life to come; and all the requital he expects is only Gratitude and Love. And ſhall we grudge to make this Poor Return? Shall we think much to do that for our God and Maker, which we count it a Reproach to be behind hand in to an Equal, a Brother? Nay, which we look upon our ſelves bound to do for leſs than the Ten-thouſandth Part of what we enjoy from that bountiful Giver of all good Gifts: Even an Alms at our Gate is eſteemed to deſerve Thanks, and none of us would bear a relieved Beggar flying in our Faces; and yet, as Helpleſs and Poor are We, as truly ſuſtained by relief from above, and much more inſolent and inſupportable, when offending againſt that bountiful Author of our Life, and all our Comforts.

But indeed I may add, that though we ſet aſide all thoſe Engagements, God hath infinite other Charms which ought to attract our Love: For nothing can contribute to recommend any thing to our Affections which is not in Him, in an incomparably higher Degree. Were all the Excellencies of Heaven and Earth united in one, the Beauty, the Wiſdom, the Virtue, the Greatneſs, the Goodneſs, the Uſefulneſs, and Advantage of every Creature; yet ſtill that Lord and Saviour, whom the Sinner treats with Contempt, is infinitely more to be valued and admired. For he does not as they do, partake only of all theſe Perfections, but is the very things in the Abſtract, Beauty, and Wiſdom, and Greatneſs, and Goodneſs, and Happineſs it ſelf; the Source of all theſe; and what Degrees of them ſoever other Things attain to, they are only ſuch Meaſures of Excellence, as this inexhauſtible Fountain of good ſees fit in his Wiſdom to impart to each of them.

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Bluſh then, ungrateful inſenſible Wretch, at thy unworthy Behaviour to ſo great, ſo good, ſo bounti-ful a Lord, and reſolve from this Inſtant to change thy Courſe of Life, and make ſome ſuitable Amends for thy former unſeemly Deportment toward him. Come before his Preſence with confuſion of Face, and beſeech him with the Prophet, *To be merciful to my Sin, for it is exceeding great.* Underſtand at laſt how great an Enemy thou haſt been to thy ſelf; that without his Mercy thou canſt not ſubſiſt; and that there is no ſuch fatal Bar to that Mercy, as Ingratitude for Favours formerly vouchſafed thee. If this have proceeded from Ignorance, learn thy Duty and the Dependance of thy Condition: If from Thoughtleſneſs, apply thy ſelf ſeriouſly to conſider what wonderful things thy Lord hath done for thee, and what account, what Improvement will he expect from them? And, ſince to all his other Mercies God hath been pleaſed to add this one more, of making thee ſenſible of thy paſt Error, and allowing thee Time and Opportunity for correcting it: Follow the Directions of this Heavenly Grace, and ſhew thy ſelf a better and more obedient Child for the time to come. Say within thine own Breaſt, " I am vanquiſhed, O " my God, at length with the ſight of thy aſtoniſhing Love; and hope I ſhall never have the Heart " to diſpleaſe thee any more: Thee, my only, my beſt Friend; who haſt prevented me with the Bleſſings of Goodneſs, and ſo much exceeded my Requeſts and largeſt Wiſhes. O! that theſe Hands " of mine, when they attempt any wicked Thing, " may always be reſtrained by the powerful Image " of thoſe Divine Hands, which for my ſake were " nailed to the Croſs! O that my Heart, when diſpoſed to any corrupt Inclination, may be ſoftened " by the view of that Heart, full of Tenderneſs and " Mercy, which was pierced to yield ſtreams of " Blood for waſhing my polluted Soul. It is too much, " my deareſt *Jeſus*, that I have neglected the Force

Pſal. xxv. 10.

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" of theſe moving Arguments heretofore, and I am
" heartily ſorry and aſhamed to have lived ſo little
" to him, who was content to die for me. But by
" thy gracious Aſſiſtance I hope to relapſe into my
" former Folly and Ingratitude no more: and do
" beg, that thy Love may for ever hereafter com-
" mit a holy Violence upon my Soul, and conſtrain
" me to a thankful Obedience. To which Reſolu-
" tions, frail, alas! and fickle in themſelves, I beg
" that thou wilt add Strength and Stedfaſtneſs, and
" from thy Throne in Heaven ſay, *Amen.*

CHAP. X. SECT. I.

Of the Time of our Death: And the different Notions we ſhall then have of the Matters relating to our Souls.

THE Scriptures frequently obſerve, and our own daily Experience abundantly proves that, while Men are in Health and Vigour the Pleaſures and Buſineſs and Enjoyments of this World take faſt hold of their Minds, and defeat all the Arguments poſſible to be urged, for their Care and Concern about Death and a future State. And too often it happens, that all the Evidence of Reaſon and Religion, all the Threatnings and Warnings of the Book of God, have little or no Effect, for the bringing Men off from a ſettled Courſe of Vice, and their moſt fatal ſecurity in ſinning. *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, *Pharaoh* and his *Egyptians*, the Traitor *Judas* and ſome others ſtand upon Record, as laſting Monuments of inflexible Obſtinacy; ſuch as no Methods of Gentleneſs can win, no Exhortation perſuade, no Threatnings or Judgments affright into

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Change of their wicked and desperate Resolutions. The Prophets especially are full of Complaints, concerning the inefficacy of their Preaching, and the impenetrable Hardness of their Peoples Hearts. I will at present only mention one Passage of *Zechariah*, by which we may make some Judgment of the rest. *They refused to hearken, and pulled away the Shoulder, and stopped their Ears, that they should not hear; Yea, they made their Hearts as an Adamant-stone, lest they should hear the Law, and the Words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former Prophets; therefore came a great Wrath from the Lord of Hosts.* Zech. vii. 11, 12. Now the same dismal Consequence, which pursued the *Jews* Disobedience then, will not fail to overtake every obdurate Sinner, who makes it a Point of Bravery to hold out against all the Methods designed for his Amendment. If they will allow no Place to serious Thoughts, while Health and Prosperity last; there will shortly come a Day in which God will be heard and known, whether they will or not: Even then, when he begins to execute his Justice: And that he manifestly does, at the time of such Persons Death, which puts an end to the Season of Tryal and Forbearance, and turns them over to that Judgment, upon which the whole of their Eternal Concern depends.

This then is properly God's Day, a Day full of Terror, and Sorrow, and sore Distress, to the Wicked; wherein the Righteousness of our Judge shall disclose it self, and every Man shall be recompensed according to his Deeds. Then it is, that *he cuts off the Spirit of Princes, and is terrible among the Kings of the Earth.* A Day, that will work a mighty Change in all other Points; when Mirth shall be turned into Weepings; Pleasure into Pains; Sturdiness into Fear, Pride into Despair: but in no Respect will the Alteration be greater, than in the Sense and Opinion of Mens Minds.

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The Wiſdom of God, which is now ſo diſparaged and *run down for Folly by the Wiſe of this World*, will then appear in her Native Beauty and full Luſtre; and by her greateſt Enemies and Deſpiſers be acknowledged the True, the only Wiſdom: And all the pretended Wiſdom of Carnal and Worldly Men ſhall then, too late, be confeſſed no better than Folly and Madneſs. A lively Image of this ſtrange Reverſe of Opinions, is left us by the Wiſe-man, in the Perſon of ſuch, as at laſt diſcover their Error in deriding ſuffering and oppreſt Virtue, and meaſuring their own Happineſs by their preſent Temporal Proſperity. *We Fools accounted his* (the Good man's) *Life Madneſs, and his End to be without Honour. But how is he numbred among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of Truth; and the Light of Righteouſneſs hath not ſhined to us, nor the Sun of Righteouſneſs roſe upon us. We wearied our ſelves in the way of Wickedneſs and Deſtruction; yea we have gone through Deſarts, where there lay no Way; but as for the Way of the Lord, we have not known it. What hath Pride profited us? Or what Good hath Riches with our Vaunting brought us? For all thoſe Things are paſs'd away like a Shadow, and as a Poſt that haſteth by*, &c.

Wiſd. v. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Obſerve here how different theſe Men are become from the Perſons they had been heretofore: How on a ſudden the Scene is changed: how they confeſs their Error, lament their Folly, complain of Labour loſt, and Repentance too late to profit them. O! that the Children of this Generation would lay theſe Things ſeriouſly to Heart, before this fruitleſs Sorrow overtake them! How does this Deſcription ſet in a clear Light the wretched State of Senſual and Worldly-minded Men, that beat their Brains, and break their Reſt, and waſte their Strength in a toilſome Purſuit of Trifles and Nothing; which ye

ney are at more Pains to compaſs, than would uffice a good Man for the attaining Heaven and verlaſting Bliſs.

This Man's Labours follow and ſtick by him for ver: But ſee the difference. Theirs deceive and eproach them at the laſt; and, when they are dri-en to the Brink of the Grave, when they are wea-ed and quite worn out with reſtleſs Buſtle and hard Drudgery, they find all their Pains employed to o Purpoſe, and the only Account they turn to, is nguiſh and Vexation, and a ſelf-upbraiding Con-ience. The Delights they ſo eagerly purſued, are ed and gone. The little Droſs of Wealth they had ked up together, will do them no manner of Ser-ice in their Extremity; Nay 'tis well, if theſe hings do not add Weight to their other Afflictions. Which yet, in wicked Men, are at that time ſo va-ous, ſo heavy, ſo inſupportable, that none but that feels them can have any proportionable dea of them: Yet becauſe ſome diſtant Conjectures ay be made, enough to warn us to avoid them, ough not enough to diſplay all their Horror, I all mention Two or Three of the moſt obvious, d leave my Reader to improve thoſe to his own piritual Advantage.

First then, We may conſider that exceſs of Pain, ithout which theſe Souls and Bodies of ours are ot ordinarily ſeparated. For theſe old Friends, hom long Converſation, and a tender fellow-feel-g of each other's Joys and Griefs, have mightily en-ared, are never prevailed upon to part, till forced it by the utmoſt Violence. And how raging, how tolerable do we imagine that Pain muſt needs be, hich drives the Soul out by Degrees, and beats it, ke a beſieged Commander from one Entrench-ent to another, till at laſt there be no Retreat, no uarter to be had? And what Condition ſhall we ppoſe that Soul in, what Anxiety and Confuſion, hen her ſtrong-holds are broken down, and all her

her Friends forſake her? when Youth and Activity, Courage and Strength, Diet and Phyſick, and all Human Helps are now no more; but Night and Day the Batteries are playing, and no Ceſſation to be obtained till the goodly Fabrick be reduced to Aſhes?

Can it ſurprize us, that ſuch Circumſtances ſhould ſhake the ſtouteſt Man, and diſarm him of all his former Gaiety and Confidence; that People then ſhould put on other Thoughts; and after a Life negligently ſpent, reflect with amazement upon what is paſſed, while the Power of Reflection continues? But even that is oftentimes utterly loſt by extremity of Pain, and that oppreſſion of the Mind which makes St. *Auguſtine*'s Advice highly neceſſary; and, well is it for my Reader, if he be perſuaded to follow it. "When your laſt Sickneſs aſ-
Serm 48. ad Frat. in Erem. "faults you, alas! how difficult a thing will it be (ſays he) "to repent of the Evil you have done "and the Good you have left undone? For then "your Mind will be drawn another Way, and the "whole Bent of it will naturally make to that Part "where the Anguiſh of your Pain lies. There are "many Obſtructions, which will defeat your De-"ſigns at that melancholy time. The Suffering "of the Body, the Fear of Death, the ſight of "your Children, the Tears of the Wife, the flat-"tering Comforts of Friends, the diſſembled Hope "of Phyſicians, the Temptations of the Devil. "And be aſſured, O Man, that the Impediments "I here give thee warning of, thou wilt in thy own "Perſon ſhortly experience. And therefore I "conjure thee, defer not thy Repentance till the "laſt day. But ſet thy Houſe in order, and make "thy Will in time of Health; whilſt thou haſt "Leiſure to think, while thou art thine own Man, "for now thou goeſt whither thou wilt, but then "thou ſhalt be bound Hand and Foot, and carried "whither thou wouldſt not."

2.

2. A *Second* Conſideration, which renders Death ceeding terrible to worldly and wicked Men, is e ſudden and eternal Parting from all that in this ife was eſteemed moſt valuable and dear to them: heir Eſtates, and Honours, and Preferments; ſtate- Houſes, gay Cloaths, rich Jewels; their Relations, riends and Acquaintance; in a word, all thoſe Con- niences and Delights, the Enjoyment whereof ade them think themſelves happy Men. And now, be torn from all theſe roughly and all on the ſud- n, to take an everlaſting Farewel, without Hope Poſſibility of ſeeing them any more (and that per- ps at a Time too when the Man was under no Ap- ehenſions at all of ſo fatal a Blow) muſt needs be very ſenſible Calamity. The Son of *Sirach*'s Ob- vation upon this Caſe is well weighed; *O Death,* Eccluſ. xli. *w bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that li-* 1. *h at Reſt in his Poſſeſſions; unto the Man that hath ding to vex him, and that hath Proſperity in all Things!* dreadful Sentence to the Worldly and Gay, the luptuous and Secure, who dreams of nothing but l Stores, and long Life, and continued Happineſs, en a Voice ſhall alarm him, like that in the Go- l, *Thou Fool! this Night ſhall thy Soul be required of* Luke xii. *e; then whoſe ſhall theſe Things be, which thou haſt* 20, 21. *vided?* And yet ſo deplorable our Lord tells us, he State of every one, who *layeth up Treaſures for ſelf, and is not Rich towards God.*

It is not poſſible for mine, or any mortal Tongue, expreſs the Terrors of thoſe laſt Minutes; when People find, that nothing of all their Labour l avail them any longer: When the very Things, which before they vainly placed their Confidence, only ſerve to awaken many afflicting Remem- nces in their Mind; when they muſt not only e theſe behind, but go themſelves to give an unt, how they were got, and how they have n uſed: When others ſhall enjoy the Fruit of Care, which now perhaps is exchanged for

everlasting Torments. *Jesus* defend us! what parting must this be! what shall we say or do, if o Pomp, our Wealth, our Honour, and Applause, co to so sad an End! what is the Man now the better, f having lived in Luxury and Pleasure with his Comp nions, in Favour with Princes, or in Credit with t World; since, at this fatal Instant, all that Jollity damped, all his Pride brought down to the Groun all his former Felicity come to a Period, and as nay much worse than if, it had never been at all

3. There is yet a *Third* Aggravation to the Mis of this Day, more uncomfortable than either of th already mentioned, and that is the Consideration what will become of such a Man, both in respect his Body and his Soul. For the former it must ne be a very mortifying Reflection, that the only In

Eccles. x. 11. ritance left for this, *is creeping Things, and Bea and Worms*; that this Body, formerly fed and clo ed with so much Niceness and Delicacy, that ject of Vanity aad Pride, thought too good for of the Discipline or Austerities of Religion, n now be abandoned of its best Friends, becom common Nuisance, and fatted up for a Prey to R tenness and Vermin. When the Prophet's Thr ning shall be fulfilled in the most literal Sense of

Isai. iii. 18, 24. Words; *The Bravery of Ornaments taken away, instead of sweet Smell there shall be Stink; and in of a Girdle a Rent; and instead of well-set H Baldness; and Burning instead of Beauty.*

And yet all this is nothing in comparison of Horrors and dreadful Apprehensions how the shall be disposed of, at its Departure out of this B The Thoughts, that she is now hurrying away t Judgment Seat of Almighty God, there to rece Sentence of everlasting Concern. And, when comes to be yet more particularly consider'd comparing the Threatnings of God, with his past Life; then the Danger puts on a dreadful indeed: When he begins to examine his own C

nce, and finds the infinite Offences, which this is eady to teſtify againſt him at his Appearance before hat Court of Juſtice: When his Sins ſtare him in the ace, and all the Woes denounced againſt them come eſh into his Memory: When the Tempter, who dulſtriouſly kept theſe Things out of his Thoughts fore, to detain him in Vice, ſhall urge and amplify em all to drive him to deſpair; ſhall not this Man hink you) labonr under Agonies inſupportable at s Paſſage out of the World? And may we not nclude St. *Auguſtine*'s Deſcription of the Caſe to very juſt, and his Exhortation upon it highly neſſary and reaſonable? "If you would be ſatisfied (ſays he) with what Fear and Pain Soul and Body part, obſerve now what I am about to tell you: The Angels at that Hour ſhall attend, to bring thy Soul before the Tribunal of a moſt dreadful Judge. Then ſhall ſhe call to mind her wicked Actions, and begin to fear and tremble exceedingly. Moſt gladly would ſhe make her Eſcape nd leave thoſe Actoins behind her; intreating he Angels to forbear her a while, and begging he Reſpite, though but of one poor Hour. But his Requeſt cannot be heard, and her Wickedneſſes, crying out with one Voice, ſhall ſay, *We re thy Works, and thou haſt done us*, and We *will ollow thee whitherſoever thou goeſt, even to the very eat of Judgment*. This (my Friends) is the Condition of a ſinful Soul parting with its Body, n Amazement and Confuſion, and dragged along ith the Load of its Sins. But now, the Good an's Soul takes its Flight with Comfort and oy, the Angels all the while conducting it with ongs of Triumph. Since then theſe Things e ſo; look forward to the Hour of Death with ear at this Diſtance, that when it approaches ou may meet it undauntedly. Conſider, and ke care now, that then you may enjoy profound Quiet and peaceful Security."

De Van. ſeculi.

Since then this Remove out of this State of Mo tality, is ſo formidable, ſo dangerous, and yet certain and unavoidable, ſince ſo many periſh i croſſing this perilous Gulph; what Man of comm Prudence would not make the Hazards and Miſeri of others, a Warning to himſelf? Who ſhall preſu to call himſelf a reaſonable Creature, that will n look before him, and make ſome Proviſion for important a Change? If thou art a Chriſtian, and d in good earneſt believe the Principles of the Religi thou profeſſeſt thyſelf of, I need not tell thee, t no Age or State can exempt thee from one Day m king the Experiment in thy own Perſon, of al have now ſet before thee. Let not then Youth, Health, or Greatneſs, or Pleaſure, or any ot treacherous Deluſion tempt thee to look upon w thou haſt read, as a Matter in which thou art li concerned, but be very confident that Sickne Age will ſhortly confine thee to thy Bed; that De is whetting thoſe Arrows, which all thy ſtrugg will not be able, either to conquer or eſcape; this Body of thine, now ſo tenderly loved, an vainly indulged, muſt crumble into Duſt, an devoured by Worms; and that thy Soul muſt, knoweſt not how ſoon, be ſummoned before the and Mighty God, there to render an Accou every Action of thy paſt Life.

SECT. II.

The Application of the former Section.

IT remains now, that we take due Care to a the two former Conſiderations to ourſelves our own Advantage and Improvement. Which beſt be done, by imagining this to be our own and that we were even now at the very Po Death; forſaken of all our falſe Confidences, expe

xpecting the next Moment that Stroke which muſt ever us from them. This would ſhew us the Vanity f all theſe Trifles here below, and put us upon the nany ſeaſonable Reflections ſuggeſted to us in Scripure. Think then of that of the Prophet ſpoken to thee Jer. xv. 5, particular. *Who ſhall have pity upon thee? or who* 6. *atl bemoan thee? or who ſhall go to aſk for thy Peace? hou haſt forſaken me, ſaith the Lord, thou art gone ackward; therefore will I ſtretch out my Hand againſt hee and deſtroy thee. I am weary of repenting. What ill ye do in the Day of Viſitation, and in the Deſola-* Iſai. x. 3. *ion that ſhall come from far? To whom will ye flee for Help? And where will ye leave your Glory?* What is hreatned to *Jeruſalem* will then be true of every icked and worldly Man, *They ſhall cry unto the* Jer. xi. 12. *Gods to whom they offered Incenſe, but they ſhall not ave them at all in the Time of their Trouble.* Their owerful Friends, their agreeable Acquaintance, eir Pleaſures, their Honours, their Wealth, thoſe dols which they have ſet up to themſelves in this ife, and ſerved much more than they did God, hall not be able to afford them the leaſt Comfort or elief in this their extreme Diſtreſs. To this meancholy Condition will thy Soul, (my Chriſtian eader) very quickly be driven, if thou do not preent it by timely Wiſdom and Diligence. To which urpoſe the Spitit of God has left us Two very exellent Rules for our Direction.

The *Firſt* is, a virtuous and truly conſcientious ife; but particularly that of living profitably in our eneration, doing Good, and abounding in Mercy nd Charity to the Poor: One Reward of which is xpreſly declared to be an eaſy and happy Paſſage at e Hour of Death. *Bleſſed are the Dead which die* Rev. xiv. *the Lord* (ſays the Voice from Heaven) *for they* 13. *hall reſt from their Labours, and their Works follow hem.* And *David* obſerves this as the particular rivilege of the charitable Man, That *the Lord ſhall* Pſal. xli. 3. *rengthen him when he lieth upon the Bed of Languiſhing,*

and will make all his Bed in his Sickneſs. A Bed o
Languiſhing it is indeed, and deep Sorrow, ſuc
as the broken Powers of drooping Nature are no
ſufficient to hold up againſt: But this Bed ſhall b
made ſoft and ſmooth, and all the Pains and reſtle
Toſſings of it wonderfully compoſed, by the inwar
Support, which the ſweet Remembrance of a wel
ſpent Life, the Memorial of our Alms before Go
and the cheering Senſe of his Favour, ſhall then m
niſter to the Godly and the Charitable Patien
Theſe are Things that will ſtick by us, and ſtan
us in ſtead, when all other Comforts fail and forſa
us; They engage the Juſtice of God on our behal
and do in ſome ſenſe render him our Debtor. F
Heb. vi. 10, 11. ſo St. *Paul* hath moſt emphatically expreſſed
*God is not unrighteous, that he ſhould forget your Wo
and Labour of Love, which ye have ſhewed toward
Name, in that ye have miniſtred to the Saints, and
miniſter, i. e.* ſupply the Neceſſities of good Pe
ple in want. *And we deſire that every one of you
ſhew the ſame Diligence to the full Aſſurance of Ho
unto the End.* That laſt Clauſe is interpreted
ſome, of that lively Expectation of future Happin
which this Virtue inſpires Men with, when th
come to die. And what could be a more powerful
ducement to any conſidering Chriſtian to abound
theſe excellent Fruits, while he hath Life and Heal
than that theſe will ſuſtain and buoy him up in
Conflict which he muſt ſhortly undergo with t
laſt formidable Enemy; that theſe will diſarm t
ſtrong Invader of his Houſe; take out the Sting
that Death, which human Nature is ſo wretched
afraid of, and enable him, without Confuſion
Conſternation of Mind, to enter the Liſts agai
the *King of Terrors* himſelf?

The Advantages of this ſingle Virtue are inde
repreſented in Scripture to be ſo many and ſo gre
that to inſtance in them all would be endleſs. T
Paſſage of our bleſſed Saviour to the Scribes and P
riſe

ſees, is very remarkable, *Give Alms of ſuch Things* Luke xi.
s ye have, and behold all Things are clean unto you. 41.
And ſo is that of *Daniel* to King *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. iv.
Wherefore, O King, let my Counſel be acceptable unto 27.
ee, and break off thy Sins by Righteouſneſs, and thy
niquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor, if it may be a
ngthening of thy Tranquillity, or (as the Margin ren-
ers it) *a healing of thine Error.* Which Texts, tho'
ey do not by any Means import, that Alms with-
ut other Virtues, can render Men acceptable to God,
make any proper Satisfaction for the Offences of
profligate Life, yet ought we to gather from hence,
at this is one of thoſe Fruits of Repentance, which
all others is moſt likely to recommend us to his
avour and Grace; and thus we ſee it evidently was
the Caſe of *Cornelius*, whoſe Converſion to the
ruth St. *Peter* was ſent to effect through that Mer-
of God, *to which* this Centurion's *Prayers and* Acts x.
ms had inclined him. To the ſame Effect is that
the Son of *Sirach*, *Water will quench a burning* Ecclus. iii.
re, and Alms make an Atonement for Sins: That Diſ- 30.
ſition which provokes us to them is an Argument
our Love of God, when we are liberal to our poor
ethren for his Sake. And this Love is the very
inciple, by which Men turn from Sin, and obtain
Pardon, as all Sin argues Hatred of God and is
eful to him. To all which I ſhall only need to
d that Application of the Parable concerning
unjuſt Steward, *Make to yourſelves therefore* Luke xvi.
ends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs, that 9.
en ye fail, they may receive you into everlaſting Ha-
itations. Out of our Stewardſhip Death will cer-
nly put us, and therefore the moſt provident
ing we can do, is to look out for ſome Way of
ſiſting, when that Time comes; and this our
rd tells us will beſt be done, by ſecuring an In-
eſt above, by the good Uſe and bountiful Diſtri-
ion of thoſe Goods of our Maſter which we have
preſent in our Hands. But,

2. *Secondly*, Another Method to prevent the Ter rors of Death, is frequently to have it in our Though beforehand. It is a Rule in Nature, that all Objec are leſs apt to diſorder us, as we by Cuſtom have re dered them more familiar. And thus by aequaintin ourſelves with Death by Premeditation, keepin his ghaſtly Face before our Eyes, and by converſin with, and by Degrees coming up cloſe to it, might take off much from the Frightfulneſs of t Object, and come to cure ourſelves of that Startin and Trembling, which Strangeneſs and Surpri chiefly occaſion in us. This was *Job*'s conſta Practice; *All the Days of my appointed Time wil wait, till my Change come.* He ſeems by theſe Wor to have made this Matter his great Study, and co tinually to be looking out, and obſerving how mu nearer Approaches this Change made towards hi And this Example might be, and no doubt is, many, imitated with wonderful Succeſs. Nothi can be more idle, than that Pretence which vain a careleſs Men urge againſt this Practice; that damps all their Mirth, breeds Melancholy, and ta away all the Enjoyment of Life. For, *if this bit Cup may not paſs* from us, but drink it every one us muſt; then ſure it is the greateſt Prudence have it much in our Eye, and to conſider how may do it with Safety and Advantage.

Job xiv. 14.

Suppoſe Men all taking the ſame Journey t Place of Happineſs and Reſt; and a certain Rive the Way, not poſſible to be avoided, upon the paſſ of which all the Succeſs of their Travels depen ſome moving gently into it, others plunging in on the ſudden, but much the greater Part drow in the Croſſing; Would not a wiſe Man go and ſta often upon the Bank, take as diligent a View of Place as he could, obſerve where the Fords and Sh lows, and where the Holes and Whirlpools lie, t notice of thoſe that went before him, what Cou they ſteered, who got well over, and where t

miſto

miſtook their Way, who periſhed in the Water? For ſuch a weighty, ſuch a neceſſary Care as this, ſhall a Man loſe himſelf, for Fear of daring to be ſerious? Are not thoſe Hours much better ſpent which ſecure him to his Journey's End, than thoſe, which keep him ignorant and thoughtleſs of his Danger? In the Caſe now propoſed I am very confident all the World will agree with me: and yet in that other more hazardous, more important Paſſage, where People are daily coming, and all muſt come at one time or other, and where vaſt Multitudes (God knows) are miſerably caſt away, we are ſo ſtupidly negligent, ſo fooliſhly tender of giving ourſelves any preſent Uneaſineſs, that we cannot endure to think of it, nor even concern ourſelves about the Matter, till we are drawn down to the very Brink, and muſt in whether we will or no.

Oh wretched Deluſion! Oh deplorable Indulgence! How many Thouſands who miſcarry everlaſtingly, might have been ſaved, and happy for ever, had they but taken the Pains to look before them, and view the Paſſage well, while at ſome Diſtance from it? For great and many are the Benefits which a frequent and ſerious Meditation of our latter End would bring to us. This ſhews Man, what he is, how frail and miſerable in his own Nature; how fond and vain in all thoſe big Conceits, which Health, and Youth, and Proſperity are apt to blow him up with. All other Glaſſes are falſe and counterfeit; but this is ſincere and honeſt, and flatters none that conſult it. And hence it is that we are ſo often and ſo earneſtly adviſed to take meaſure of ourſelves from this. Becauſe the Meditation of Death is of univerſal Influence upon our Manners, and corrects the Temper of our Minds: Particularly we may depend upon it, for theſe following good Effects.

1. *Firſt*, It will keep us in a perpetual awe of God and Judgment, and under a provident Expectation of dying.

2. *Secondly*,

2. *Secondly*, By this means we ſhall be cured of a
that raſh unthinking Way of living, too commonly
obſervable: Thus *Job* declares, that the Fear o
Death had made him ſolicitous, and that he doubted
his Works: Thus *David* begins a Pſalm upon Mor-
tality, with *I ſaid I will take heed to my Ways, tha
I offend not*; and St. *Paul* quickens Men up to Cha-
rity and Moderation, by telling them, *They muſt d
Good while they have Time*; and that becauſe th
*Faſhion of this World paſſeth away, and the Time i
ſhort, therefore they ſhould take care to uſe the World
as not abuſing it.*

Pſalm xxxix.

Gal. vi. 10.

1 Cor. vii. 29, 31.

3. A *Third* excellent Effect is the humbling u
by a due Senſe of our own Vileneſs; ſhewing u
how miſerably frail and fleeting we are. For wha
is Man, *whoſe Life is a Vapour*, and whoſe mo
flouriſhing Beauty *and Glory is but as a Flower of th
Field*, which, *as ſoon as the Wind paſſeth over, i
blaſted and gone, and the Place thereof ſhall know i
no more.* He that bears his own Mortality much i
Mind, will feel it work very ſenſibly upon his Va
nity and his Paſſions, and ſay to himſelf with th
wiſe Preacher, *Why is Earth and Aſhes proud, whe
he that is to day a King, to morrow ſhall die? Pri
was not made for Man, nor furious Anger for them
that are born of a Woman.*

James iv. 14.

Pſalm ciii. 15, 16.

Eccluſ. x. 8, 9, 10.

4. A *Fourth* Advantage will be the caſting off a
anxious and unneceſſary Cares for the Things of thi
World, which thoſe Men are generally moſt addict-
ed to, who leaſt think of leaving it. And this i
not only a Fault like other common Faults, but ve
ry often ſuch as God permits People to fall into by
Way of Puniſhment for ſome former Offence. So
ſays *Solomon*, *God giveth to a Man that is good in hi
Sight, Wiſdom, and Knowledge, and Joy; but to th
Sinner he giveth Travel, to gather and to heap up.*

Eccleſ. ii. 26.

5. And this by Degrees will advance into a *Fifth*
good Fruit, which is, of all others, the moſt com-
mendable and Chriſtian Diſpoſition, That I mean o
deſpiſing

despising the Creatures in comparison of the Creator; weaning our Affections from the World, and setting them entirely upon God; breathing out with David, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is nothing upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Strength of my Life, and my Portion for ever:* And declaring with St. *Paul, I esteem all Things as Dung that I may win Christ.* Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26. Phil. iii. 8.

6. And thus at last we shall arrive to a *Sixth*, which is the last I shall mention at present; an Indifference and Contempt, or, rather indeed, a Satisfaction in, and Desire for Death. This was likewise St. *Paul*'s Case, *I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better.* Ibid. i. 23. So that, living in a holy Awe and Fear of Death, which was the first Effect I mentioned, we advance by Degrees to a State of being perfectly contented with it, nay of thinking the Time long, and earnestly wishing, that our Lord would in Mercy hasten his Coming. And this Frame of Mind is the highest Degree of Comfort and Happiness possible for good Men to attain to, while they are yet in a State of Mortality. And what need I say more to persuade my Reader, that he would be very frequent and serious in the Meditations of, and Provision for, this important Day? Observe how *Job* describes the Security of the good Man, *Thou shalt not be afraid of Destruction, when it cometh; at Calamity and Famine thou shalt laugh, neither shalt thou be afraid of the Beasts of the Earth: For thou shalt be in League with the Stones of the Field, and the Beasts of the Field shall be at Peace with thee. Thou shalt know that thy Tabernacle shall be in Peace, and shall come to thy Grave in a full Age, as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season.* Job v. 21, &c. And a very significant Similitude this is, if we reflect, that a good Man's Death is the first Day of his Harvest, in which he begins to reap the Product of all those good Deeds, which he hath sown in this Life, and

which

which are then grown up to full Maturity and pro digious Increaſe. I conclude therefore this Point as *Job* does that Chapter; *Lo, this we have ſearched ſo it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy Good.*

CHAP. XI. SECT. I.

Of the Sinner's Puniſhment after this Life.

OF all the Means, which God is pleaſed t make uſe of for the reclaiming Men from wicked Courſe, and working them up to tha holy Reſolution, which it is the Deſign of this Boo to promote, none ſeem better calculated for th Frailty of human Nature, than the Threatnings Vengeance upon obſtinate Tranſgreſſors. This i no doubt, the Reaſon, why the Prophets at ever turn, thunder out Plagues and Deſtruction to the backſliding People. And we can eaſily ſatisfy ou ſelves, why this Method ſhould be more ſucceſsf than the reſt, becauſe it falls in ſo exactly with th Fundamental Principle of all our Actions: I mea the natural Love we bear to ourſelves, and conſequen ly the natural Fear of our own Danger and Ruin Accordingly we have Inſtances of its prevailin upon very ſtubborn and diſingenuous Temper The City of *Nineveh* were preſently awakened in Repentance, when the Prophet *Jonas* foretold th Deſtruction of their City ſo nigh at Hand. An even Soldiers and Publicans, Men of Proof again other Impreſſions, came unto *John Baptiſt*, and we ſolicitous to know their Duty, and to ſave them

Luke iii. 9. ſelves, upon his declaring, that *the Axe was laid the Root of the Tree, and every Tree that brought forth good Fruit ſhould preſently be hewn down, and c into the Fire.* Upon this Account, after the Con

deratio

deration of our own Death, and a Judgment to come, I cannot but think it may be of great Use, to say something, with regard to those Punishments, which are reserved for them that live and die impenitent.

And upon this Occasion, I shall bespeak my Reader, as St. *Bernard* did his Audience, "If thou art "lost, O Man, (says he) to all Shame and Mo- "desty, which yet are Principles becoming so no- "ble a Creature; if thou hast no feeling of Sorrow "and Remorse, which the Stupidity of carnal "Minds is often dead to; yet lose not the Impres- "sions of Fear, which are common even to the "brute Beasts. We load an Ass, and tire him out "with his Labour, and he careth not for it; but "if we would thrust him into the Fire, or throw "him down a deep Precipice, Love of Life and "Fear of Death, and natural Instinct, prevail with "even this otherwise insensible Creature to avoid "and run away from it. Fear then at least, and be "not more insensible than this despised Animal: "Fear Death, and Judgment, and Hell. Fear is "therefore called the Beginning of Wisdom rather "than Shame or Sorrow, because this Passion is more "powerful than either of the other. *Remember the* "*End, and thou shalt never do amiss*, says the wise "Man; and sure Men would not dare to sin, if "they did but remember the Punishments after this "Life, in which a wicked Course will end at last." Ecclus. vii. 36.

1. *First* then, As to those Punishments in general, tho' the Scripture had not described the Greatness of them at all to us, yet there are some Considerations, which our own Reason is capable of offering, sufficient to convince us, that they will be exceeding severe and grievous to be born. For *First*, as God shews himself a God in all his Works, that is, Great, and Wonderful, and Terrible; so we have Reason to think, he will not fail to do in his Punishments, after a very particular Manner. Hence he hath distinguished himself by those Titles, *The God*

God of Juſtice, and *the God of Vengeance*. And *David* does not only confeſs, that we cannot ſubſiſt under his Anger, but exaggerates the Matter yet more, after a very elegant Manner. *Who can underſtand the Power of thy Wrath? for even thereafter as a Man feareth, ſo is thy Diſpleaſure.* Meaning, that even the Paſſion of Fear itſelf, though infinitely the moſt extravagant of all others, cannot yet exceed in this Point, or form to itſelf Images more dreadful, than are thoſe Miſeries, which they who have provoked God ſhall actually endure. And ſince his other Works of Majeſty ſo far tranſcend our utmoſt Capacity of conceiving them, we may infer, that his Hand, almighty in puniſhing, will not exert itſelf leſs amazingly than we ſee already it hath done, in other Inſtances of the ſame almighty Power. And hence it is, that God himſelf calls upon Men to fear him from the Conſideration of his Omnipotence, manifeſted in the Wonders of the Creation. Intimating, that the Revenge he will one Day take upon thoſe, who harden their Hearts againſt this Fear, ſhall not fail to hold a Correſpondence and juſt Proportion with his other Works; and to exceed the utmoſt Stretch of human Knowledge and Imagination, as thoſe plainly do.

Pſal. xc. 11.

Jer. v. 22.

2. Another Meaſure of God's Severity in puniſhing may be taken from his marvelous and unſpeakable Mercy. For as this is the very Nature and Perfection of the Godhead, ſo likewiſe is Juſtice: And theſe two, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, *Embrace and Kiſs each other:* That is, they are ſo tempered, as both to be conſiſtent, and both to be equal, that is, infinite in God. The many aſtoniſhing Inſtances then of God's incomprehenſible Mercy in ſaving and pardoning them that repent, and all he hath done for the bringing Men to the Knowledge and Fruition of himſelf, (with regard to which ſuch pardoned Offenders are ſtiled *Veſſels of Mercy*) help us to conceive the Severity of his Juſtice towards thoſe ob-

obdurate and impenitent Wretches, who will not be wrought upon by all his gracious Methods; and who for that Reason are termed *Vessels of Wrath*, i.e. Persons *fitted for Destruction*, ripe for Vengeance, and such as he resolves to exercise his Rage and utmost Indignation upon.

3. A *Third* Consideration to the same Purpose may be his Patience and Long-suffering, which restrains him from cutting Men off in their Sins at present. He looks on now, as if he regarded not; and suffers many Wretches to go on from one Wickedness to another, from one Year to another, to live to a great Age in transgressing his Laws, and in contempt of his Divine Majesty. He permits the Persuasions of his Word, the Promises and Invitations, the Threatnings and Examples of his Anger, the good Motions of his Spirit and Grace, and all the Means that infinite Goodness can devise for the gaining over reasonable Creatures, to be neglected, abused, despised, ridiculed. And can we think he will always endure this? Would any of our Brethren, our Equals bear the hundredth thousandth Part of the Affronts we put upon God.

Among us, it is a ruled Case, that Patience abused aggravates the Provocation, and the longer we spare, the more we think we have a Right to punish. And is it not so, think you, with our Master in Heaven too? Sure I am St. *Paul* upbraids Men for not *knowing*, i. e. not considering, *That the Goodness of God leads us to Repentance; and tells them, who despise such Forbearance and Long-suffering, that by their Hardness and impenitent Heart, they treasure up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God; who shall render to every Man according to his Deeds.* The longer the Heap is gathering the more it will increase, and when they are ripe for Destruction, then they shall be *paid*, as the Prophet expresses it, *Measure for Measure according to the Multitude of their own Abominations.* Rom. ii. 4, 5.

Hence

Hence, no doubt, God makes uſe of that Expreſſion to *Abraham*, *The Iniquities of the Amorites is not yet full.* And our Saviour to the Scribes and Phariſees, *Fill ye up then the Meaſure of your Fathers:* And the Angel to St. *John*, *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill; for behold I come, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Works ſhall be.* By all which we are given to underſtand, that Forbearance will not laſt always; that Gentleneſs in this Life is a Preface and Preparation to Severity in the next. With regard to which we may very well interpret that of *David*, *the Lord ſhall laugh the Wicked to Scorn, for he hath ſeen that his Day is coming:* Even the dreadful Day of Account, when God ſhall deal with every obdurate Sinner, as he threatens to do with *Jeruſalem*, in Terms that well expreſs the unrelenting Vengeance of that Day. *An End is come, it watcheth for thee; behold* IT IS COME. *I will pour out my Fury, and accompliſh mine Anger upon thee; I will judge thee according to thy Ways, and will recompence thee for all thine Abominations. Mine Eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have Pity. Deſtruction is come, the Day draweth near, and ye ſhall know, that I am the Lord that ſmiteth.*

Gen. xv. 16.
Mat. xxiii. 32.
Rev. xxii. 11, 12.
Pſalm xxxvii. 13.
Ezek. vii. 6, &c.

SECT. II.

Of the Nature of the Puniſhment appointed for wicked Men after this Life.

BY what hath been ſaid of this Puniſhment in general, we cannot but be convinced how juſtly the Apoſtle obſerves, that it *is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God.* But this will be yet much more evident, if we proceed in the Ne

Heb. x. 31.

Pla

lace to consider, what the Scriptures have disco-
ered to us concerning the Quality and Manner of
at Punishment, which shall be inflicted upon Sin-
rs after their Departure out of this World. And
o' no finite Understanding is able to conceive,
uch less can any Tongue or Pen express, the Bit-
rness and Extremity of those Torments the Repro-
te endure; yet shall I endeavour to give such an
ccount of them at least, as may be of use to rouse
e careless and sensual into some Consideration,
r Prevention of such insupportable, such incom-
ehensible Misery.

First then, for the Place, in which the damned
ffer, this is expressed and described in Scripture by
veral Names, all denoting Horror and Misery.
ch as *Hell*, the *Pit*, the *Place of Darkness*, the Psalm ix.
ep, the Lake of *God's Wrath*, the *Lake of Fire* Rev. xx.
d *Brimstone*, *utter Darkness*. And as to what Mat. xxii.
rt of Inhabitants it is stored with, and what their
mployment is, we are told, that they are the *De-* Mat. xxv.
l and his Angels; *Spirits created for Vengeance*, *which* Ecclus.
their Fury lay on sore Strokes. But the most usual xxxix. 28.
tle is that of *Gehenna*, or *Hell*, alluding to the
lley of *Hinnom* near *Jerusalem*, where the idola-
us *Jews* formerly sacrificed their Children to
oloch, a Place afterwards made a common Dung-
. So that this Word imports the Barbarity of
e Tormentors, the miserable Shrieks, and Cries,
d Howlings of the Sufferers, and the loathsome
thiness of the Place itself; with regard to this it
called *Tophet*, another Name for that *Valley of*
nnom, which *Isaiah* says, *is ordained of old*, *made* Isai xxx.
ep *and large*, *the Pile thereof is Fire and much* 33.
od, *and the Breath of the Lord*, *like a Stream of*
imstone, *doth kindle it*.

Such is the Dungeon of the damned: And for the
ins they undergo, we may observe that as Heaven
d Hell are contrary, assigned to different Sorts of
rsons, and for different Causes; so are the Proper-

ties, and Conditions, and Effects of each directly contrary. Whatever then is ſpoken in Scripture concerning the Bleſſedneſs of the one, the Reverſe of all that, we may conclude, goes to make up the Calamities of the other. And when St. *Paul* ſaith, that *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him*; it follows from hence, that neither hath any Heart been able to conceive the Things which God hath decreed to inflict upon them that hate him. And, when the State of the bleſſed is ſaid to be perfect Felicity, and to want no Ingredient that can be had or deſired to make good Men happy; the Miſery of the damned muſt likewiſe be underſtood to be extreme and abſolute, and to want no one Aggravation, which can contribute to make the wicked perfectly miſerable. This Bleſſedneſs and Miſery, by conſequence, are both infinite, both univerſal.

1 Cor. ii. 9.

And herein is a mighty Difference between the Wretchedneſs of this, and that of the next Life, that all Men's Sufferings at preſent admit of Degrees and Meaſure, and extend only to ſome particular Part or Reſpect; but there no Part ſhall be free, no one Conſideration ſhall be found, in regard of which the Sufferer is exempted. And yet our Pains, though thus limited at preſent, are ſometimes ſo extreme that we are not able to ſupport them, and a Man would not be content to endure the Gout, the Stone, nay the Tooth-ach, long together, to gain the greateſt Advantage in the World. But ſuppoſe now the whole Body at once to be in the utmoſt Pain, that every Joint or Veſſel of it is capable of; ſuppoſe this without the leaſt Abatement or Intermiſſion; who could abide, who can imagine the lamentable Condition of that Man? But then conſider again what a Difference there is between enduring this Torment for a few Days, and to all Eternity; between enduring it upon a ſoft Bed, and in a boiling Furnace;

een having ones Friends and Comforters about
m, and Furies and Enemies torturing and insulting
er him: Think of this, Sinner, and if thou wouldst
content to do and suffer a great deal, rather than
dergo the less for a little while; be so wise, so
nd to thyself, as to take a little Trouble, rather
n smart under the greater for ever and ever.

It is really Matter of Wonder and Amazement,
t God should discover so many dreadful Circum-
nces of this Punishment, and yet that stupid Men
uld entertain so little Fear of it. The Universa-
and Extremity of these Pains are not only to be
rred from the Reasons already alledged, but suf-
ently declared in Scripture. There we are told,
the damned shall be tortured *Day and Night*; Rev. xx.
of *Babylon* it is said, *Give her Torment and Sor-* 10.
: By this manner of Expression is intimated to Ibid. xviii.
that the Pains of Hell are exercised, not like 7.
Sufferings of this World, for Chastisement and
ormation; but for Affliction and just Revenge.
since, in such Executions, the Extremity is
to bear proportion to the Offence, to be made
plary by it, and to the Power and Dignity of
Person offended; imagine as well as you are
the Bitterness of those Torments, which al-
nty God shall inflict upon the Reprobate in the
Life, infinite as his own Wisdom and Power;
unrelenting as the Sinner's Heart was formerly.
so it is threatned expressly: *Because I have called*, Prov. i.
e refused; *I have stretched out my Hand, and no* 24, 26.
regarded, I will also laugh at your Calamity,
mock when your Fear cometh.

Besides these Sufferings, common to all, it hath
an Opinion much received, that there shall be
cular Sorts of Torments suited to the Quality
ch Man's Offence; and this is implied in those
s of Scripture, which speak of God's recom-
ng Sinners, *according to the Work of their own* Psalm
s, and filling them with the Fruit of their own xxviii. 6,
Prov. i. 31.

Ephr. *de ver. Pœnit. cap.* 2. *Devices. As there are different Sins* (ſays an ancient Writer) *ſo ſhall there be Variety of Puniſhments. The Adulterer ſhall have one Kind of Torment, the Murtherer another, the Robber and Extortioner another, the Drunkard another, the Liar and Falſe-ſwearer another:* Each, that which ſhall be moſt ſenſible and afflicting to him. And then he proceeds, that the proud Man ſhall be trodden under Foot; the Glutton gnawed with extreme Hunger; the Drunkard parched up with unquenchable Thirſt; the voluptuous filled with Gall; the tender and delicate ſeared with hot Irons. All which ſome have thought to be denoted in that Deſcription of the wicked Chap. xx. Man's Sufferings given at large by *Job*. But certain it is, that the Torments of every Sinner ſhall be extreme beyond all Imagination; and that there ſhall be no Poſſibility left of one Moment's Intermiſſion or Comfort. This is ſufficiently declared by that Luke xvi. rable of *Lazarus* and the Rich Man, where not much as one Drop of Water could be obtained cool his Tongue. Some ſmall Refreſhment it ſeems this would have been to him, could his Requeſt have prevailed for it. But he that before had denied Crumbs which fell from his Table, cannot now tain even this Drop of Water. He does not ſume to aſk a full Deliverance, and he cannot heard for ſo poor a Relaxation.

Good God! What a ſtrange Neceſſity was this Man, who ſo lately had the World at Will, driven to? What a wretched Change is this, from the lity and Plenty he had been accuſtomed to, all Life long upon Earth! O! that the Men live in ſinful Wealth, would conſider this Example of God's implacable Severity! O! that we would take warning and grow wiſe, from the Calamities others, which, if we do not, will certainly be own, and are therefore revealed to us, that we prevent and avoid them.

But if to all this we add the Eternity of thoſe

ments, this will increaſe the Miſery beyond all human Comprehenſion. No Affliction in this World ſo violent, but that Length of Time either removes it quite, or in ſome good Degree abates it. Either the Tormentor, or the Perſon tormented dies, or ſome other Accident happens, to break the force of the Calamity. But here we have no Ground to build ſuch Hope or Comfort upon. The Scripture ſays, *They ſhall be tormented for ever and ever*; Rev. xx. that their *Puniſhment muſt be everlaſting*; and ſo long Mat. xxv. as God continues to be God, he ſhall continue to hate, and to exeeute Vengeance upon Sin: Here both the Inflicter, and the Sufferer, muſt live eternally; and the State of the Wicked is therefore called Death, not to denote that they ſhall ceaſe to be, but that they ſhall be in Miſery, out of which there is no Redemption.

Oh! (ſays a holy Father in one of his Meditations) ould but the damned have aſſurance, that their orments ſhould laſt no more Thouſand Years, than ere are Stars in the Firmament, or Grains of Sand on the Sea Shore, even this ſo diſtant Proſpect of eleaſe would afford ſome Conſolation. But this Word *Never* breaks their Heart; as it muſt needs to think, that after Millions of Ages they are no arer to their Journey's End, than when they firſt out. Think but how tedious, how inſupportable e ſingle Hour would be, to be ſtretched upon a ack, or lye in Flames of Fire and ſcalding Brimſtone. e find by Experience, that one reſtleſs Night, to a an in Sickneſs or Pain, ſeems a whole Age. He ſes and turns from ſide to ſide, tells every Clock, d waits for Morning, tho' upon a ſoft Bed, and h his Friends about him. And, if ſuch a one were e, that this Uneaſineſs would lie upon him for ſen Years inceſſantly, the Grief of that Thought re ſcarce to be born. But if one Night in a Fever ſo grievous, What muſt Millions of Ages be in the ke of God's Wrath? What that Worm which ne-

ver dies, and that Fire which is never to be quenched? Continuance renders even the moſt grateful Things troubleſome and nauſeous; but to continue for ever in unſpeakable Torments! *Jeſus* deliver us in his great Mercy! How is it to be endured? How is it to be thought of?

To all that went before I might add another Circumſtance, which the Scripture repreſents the Uncomfortableneſs of this Condition by, and that is, the diſmal Darkneſs of thoſe infernal Priſons, than which nothing is more terrible to human Nature: And alſo that of ſuffering unpitied, which in this World we find by Experience to be no ſmall Aggravation to any Adverſity. But theſe, though grievous in themſelves, I rather chuſe but juſt to mention only, becauſe if the Exquiſiteneſs, and the Eternity of thoſe Torments will not deter Men from offending God, and drawing down infinite Miſeries upon themſelves, it is not in reaſon to be expected, that any other Conſiderations relating to them ſhould have more ſucceſsful Influence.

SECT. III.

The Second Sort of Puniſhment, called that of Los

THE whole Account of this everlaſting Miſe hitherto mentioned, ſad as it is, does yet ma but a Part of the Sinner's Puniſhment, diſtinguiſh by Divines by *Pæna ſenſus*, or thoſe ſenſible To meants inflicted upon Soul and Body in Hell. B beſides this, there is another Branch uſually term the *Penalty of Loſs*, and comprehending all th Advantages, which theſe wretched Men have giv out of their Hands, and for ever deprived the ſelves of. That this Diſtinction is not merely notio al, may appear by this plain and familiar Examp When a Perſon of Wealth and Honour falls unc

the Senetnce of the Law for ſome capital Crime, he does not only ſuffer Death, but loſes all he enjoyed; his Eſtate is confiſcated, his Blood is tainted, his Family are ruined. And the Detriment and Diſhonour, which by this means fall upon his Wife, and Children, and Relations; the Forfeiture of Goods and Eſtate; the Stain upon his Reputation, and Honour; the undoing of all his Poſterity; the being cut off in his Youth, and ſnatched away from all his Pleaſures and Enjoyments, is not only a real, but in the Eſteem of many, a more afflicting Puniſhment, than any bodily Suffering whatſoever.

And if the Caſe be thus in Temporal, which yet are but mere Trifles, when put into the Balance againſt eternal Loſſes; much more may we conceive to aggravate the Puniſhment of the damned, who are cut off for ever from the Sight and Fruition, and favour of God, and by that, from the great, the true, the only Happineſs. For God is the ſole Fountain of all Good, and in the Love and Enjoyment of, and Union with him, the very Subſtance of Man's everlaſting Felicity conſiſts. What a wretchedneſs would it be thought, to loſe in this World all Light and Senſe, and Influence, all the cheering Warmth and Vigour of the Sun; to have all our Organs of Senſe numb'd up; and live under a perpetual Inactivity, frozen up with Cold, and impriſon'd in Darkneſs? And yet all this is not the thouſandth part of what Men ſuffer by the Loſs of God's Preſence, the Father of Lights, the Author and Sum of Infinite and everlaſting Glory. All Bliſs and Joy, the Society of Angels, the Praiſes and Triumphs of the Heavenly State, the pleaſing Reflections of having done well; in a word, every Thing that can contribute to make Men eaſy and happy, is loſt at once; and all the contrary Ingredients of Miſery are included under this Particular.

Here lies the true Ground of that horrible Torment, called the *never dying Worm*, that lies perpe-

tually corroding and devouring the Hearts of the Wicked, thoſe Stings and Agonies of ſad Remorſe, with which their Conſciences are for ever griping and gnawing them. And this ſeems principally to conſiſt in the Remembrance of the Inſtruments and Cauſes of their preſent Calamities: That Negligence and Folly, and incurable Perverſeneſs, by which theſe Men have loſt that Felicity, which others, under the ſame Diſpenſations and Means of Grace, have gained and ſecured the Poſſeſſion of for ever. And who is able to expreſs that grinding Pain, which ſhall then pierce their very Souls, upon every Recollection, what Opportunities were offer'd them, to have eſcaped that dreadful Torment, and to have been as inexpreſſibly ſatisfied and happy, as now they are miſerable and diſcontented? How eaſy it once was to have compaſſed this, how often they were convinced, that this ought to be done; how they reſolved to do it, and yet fell back again from thoſe good Reſolutions: How many Warnings they had of their Danger, and yet how little Impreſſion theſe made upon them: How exceeding vain all thoſe Trifles here below were upon which they threw away their Time and Pains: How they ſold their Souls and Heaven for nought; and are come now to feel thoſe inſupportable Miſeries, which they could not be perſuaded to fear: How thoſe whom they thought Fools in the World, are now exalted; and how deſpicably fooliſh thoſe Methods are, which they once miſtook for the only true Wiſdom. Theſe and a thouſand more cutting Reflections will then be laid before them with all their aggravating Circumſtances, but no more killing than that of their Condition being paſt all Hope, all Remedy; and that by coming too late theſe Convictions come altogether in vain. Yet ſhall this fruitleſs Regret never ceaſe, never intermit; and no one Conſideration ſhall contribute to *their weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of Teeth*, more than that they are wretched beyond all Comfort, without

all Redreſs; that their own Careleſsneſs and Obſtinacy hath made them ſo; that they cannot help ſeeing this, and yet they cannot ſee, or lament it to any Effect. This Indignation, and Rage, and perpetual Fretting ſhall drive them to Deſpair, and rend their Hearts in Peices.

Oh! How will theſe Men wiſh, that it were not yet too late to amend! Oh! Had they but another ſhort Life to lead, with what Watchfulneſs and Diligence would they improve every Moment! Oh! might they but be tried once more, how faithfully would they ſerve God! But this is not to be done, and even that Blood which ranſom'd a whole World, cannot purchaſe one Day's Time, to make a ſecond Experiment, upon thoſe who have abuſed, and were not reformed by the former. It is We alone, my Friends, We, who by the Grace and Long-ſuffering of our good God, are yet alive on this ſide Hell; We have this ineſtimable Benefit of Time, for Prevention and Amendment: And would to God We were ſo happy, as to reſolve immediately, and to make the beſt of this Day of ours, while it laſts. For alas! It wears away apace, and will quickly be paſt with Us too: We ſhall not be able to retrieve one of theſe ſlighted Hours, that now are thought to hang upon our Hands: No, not though we would redeem it at the Price of Ten thouſand Worlds. For all this no doubt, were it in their Power, the damned would gladly do; and therefore the true Method of managing this Talent, now it is in our Hands, is ſo to uſe and put it out to Intereſt, that when we ſhall go out of this World, we may have no Cauſe to wiſh ourſelves here again, or to curſe the Day that ever we came into it at all.

Behold now is the accepted Time, behold now is the Day of Salvation. But then it is *to day, that we muſt not harden our Hearts*, for we know not what may become of us to morrow. It may be, *to morrow*, if we defer till then, theſe Hearts may yet be more 2 Cor. vi. 2.

more hard and ſecure than ever they were heretofore; it may be before *to morrow*, we may be out of a Condition, and actually in thoſe Miſeries, which to day might be prevented. Had *Pharaoh* followed thoſe relentings cloſe, which the firſt Plagues excited in his Heart, How many dreadful Blows had he and his People eſcaped? But it was too late to think of retreating, when he was in the midſt of the *Red Sea*. Had the rich Man had any Compaſſion, while *Lazarus* lay at his Gate, he had not needed to aſk a Drop of Water for the cooling of his Tongue; but even this was aſked to no Purpoſe, when he came to be tormented in that Flame. Then he would fain have obtained a Meſſage from the Dead, to warn his Brethren of their Danger; but he is anſwered, that this was neither neceſſary, nor like to meet with better Succeſs, than the Means of Salvation, which were loſt upon them already.

For what indeed can be done more for the reclaiming wicked Men? What Courſe can be taken with thoſe upon whom neither Exhortations, nor Threatnings, nor Warnings, nor Examples will do any Good? We know, or ought to know, that many have fallen under God's Diſpleaſure, who do not appear to have been greater Sinners than ourſelves; We know, nay cannot but know, that we muſt ſhortly die; and, if we commit the ſame Faults with them, ſhall certainly receive the ſame Condemnation. We may be well aſſured, that if we live on ſtill in Wickedneſs, we cannot poſſibly be ſaved; we have ſeen that the Miſeries of the wicked hereafter are intolerable, are infinite, are eternal; we cannot but confeſs, that they who for any ſhort Pleaſure or Advantage here have caſt themſelves into them, are of all Men moſt miſerable becauſe moſt obſtinately fooliſh. Why then do we not lay aſide every Weight which may hinder us in this Race? Why do we not break looſe from the Snares of this wicked World, and burſt aſunder all our Chains, by the Force of

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godly Reſolutiou and Zeal? Why ſhould we venture to ſleep one Night more in Sin, ſince that Night may happen to be our laſt, and cut us off from all our Hope for ever?

Sure, if we be wiſe, if we be Men, and pretend to act with Reaſon, we ſhall clear our Souls of theſe Dangers immediately! we ſhall draw near to God, while he is willing to receive us. We ſhall be wrought upon by *Moſes and the Prophets*, by the ſtanding and ordinary Methods of Salvation, as the rich Man and his Relations ought to have been, in the Time of their Health and Proſperity. Let that Example of his be frequently before our Eyes, that his Torments and fruitleſs Wiſhes may quicken our holy Reſolutions. God is a wonderful God in his Patience, and Goodneſs, and infinite Condeſcention; in his Life he courts us, he ſeeks us, he lays himſelf (as it were) at our Feet; and all, to move us to our own Good, to win us, to draw us, to pluck us back from Deſtruction. But after this Life is ended, he will be no leſs wonderful in Juſtice and Vengeance. He then will change his Style, and deal with us after quite another Manner. And oh! the Terrors of that Day, when the meek Lamb of God ſhall turn fierce and angry Lion; and our much injured Saviour approve himſelf a juſt and implacable Avenger! And well may he do ſo, after all he hath done in vain on our behalf already. For the Man, who is ſo invited, ſo aſſiſted, ſo forewarned, as every Chriſtian is, or may be; he that ſees his Danger plain before his Face, and is not moved to caution by it, may be pitied as a loſt Wretch, but cannot be helped or kept from being loſt; ſince no Remedies can ever do good to thoſe, who will not let them have their proper Operation.

But you will ſay perhaps, "What Remedy is there after all, by which theſe Miſeries may be avoided? I ſee my own Danger, I believe the Threatnings of God, and the Teſtimony of my Conſcience

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" againſt me makes me tremble at them; but how " ſhall I amend the Matter which I find ſo bad?" I anſwer; If what you ſay be true, You are in a very good Way toward it already; for, to believe, and to be afraid of God's Judgments is a fair Step towards your Recovery. Theſe are the Groundwork of all good Motions. Faith lays the Foundation, and Fear will carry it up to Converſion and Amendment. But yet theſe alone are not enough; for the Devils themſelves, St. *James* obſerves, do ſo much: And therefore theſe muſt have other Virtues built upon them ſtill; Hope, and Love, and Repentance for former Faults, Sorrow for the paſt, and ſincere ſtedfaſt Reſolution of living better for the Time to come.

This is the true Remedy indeed, a ſovereign Medicine for all our ſpiritual Diſeaſes, the only Prevention of all the Miſeries we have been treating of. This diverts the Threatnings of God, pacifies and ſhelters the Sinner from his Wrath; and does in ſome Sort vanquiſh and triumph over the Divine Juſtice. For as God never did, nor will, nor can (according to the ſtated Meaſures of his Dealings with Mankind) forgive any Offender, who does not repent. So neither ever did he, or will, or can, deny his Mercy and Pardon to any, who *with true Faith and hearty Repentance turn to him.* And why then ſhould we not apply this Remedy in its proper Seaſon, and take our Diſtemper in Time, before our Symptoms be deſperate? And (as St. *Auguſtin* ſays upon the Words, *Whither ſhall I flee then from thy Preſence?*) Whither can we flee, but to his Goodneſs by Repentance, whoſe Omnipotence we had armed againſt us by Offending? For no Man can flee from him ſucceſsfully but by fleeing to him; from the Severity of his angry Juſtice, to the Sanctuary of his Mercy in *Chriſt Jeſus.* Were this Cure to be obtained at never ſo great Expence, to be ſought at never ſo great a Diſtance, yet even thus it were our Wiſ-

dom to procure it; much more then, when it is altogether nigh at Hand, and eaſy to be had.

If a Man under Sentence of Death, and upon the Way to Execution, could be put in a Way of delivering himſelf ſo readily, would he be deaf to the Propoſals? Would he ſuffer any other Thing to divert him from compaſſing ſuch an Eſcape? And yet our Caſe is much more urgent: For temporal Death bears no Proportion to eternal Torments; and an unreformed Sinner is as much in the Way to Execution, and (conſidering the Uncertainty of Life) may undergo the Law much ſooner, than any Malefactor condemn'd by an earthly Judge. What ſtrange Stupidity is it then to be thoughtleſs and remiſs in ſo important an Affair? Our Lord hath not only provided, not only diſcovered the Remedy, but hath put it in our own Power; and it depends entirely upon our own Will, whether we will be ſafe by it or not. For what can be more in any Man's Choice, than whether he will diſlike his paſt vicious Courſes, whether he will betake himſelf for Counſel and Aſſiſtance to the Guides of his Soul, the Miniſters of the Church of *Chriſt*; whether he will qualify himſelf for having thoſe Sins regularly looſed by theſe Delegates of our Lord upon Earth, which upon theſe Terms will moſt certainly be looſed in Heaven; whether he will have that Pardon ſealed by the bleſſed Sacraments, and ſo teſtify his Union with true Believers, as a Member of his Lord's Myſtical Body? The leaving ſuch Commiſſioners behind him as his Prieſts, ſuch precious and undoubted Pledges of his Love and Reconciliation, as his bleſſed Body and Blood, are ineſtimable Comforts and Advantages: Such as muſt needs riſe up in Judgment at the laſt Day againſt all them, who neglect or refuſe to make a due uſe of, and take refuge in them, for the preſent Peace and everlaſting Salvation of their Souls, by thus renewing their Covenant with God,

God, and obtaining full Remiſſion of their former Sins.

To conclude this Point. Do not ſuppoſe, that being called a Chriſtian will avail in the Day of Diſtreſs, if thou do not live, and act as becomes a Perſon diſtinguiſhed by that Name. If thou haſt fallen into Sins, inconſiſtent with the true import of this glorious Title, loſe no Time, but break off from the Bondage of ſuch Vices without Delay: Apply the Means of Grace preſcribed here, for theſe are the ordinary Methods of bringing Men to Heaven, and conſequently thou canſt have no Foundation for Dependance upon any other. Render thyſelf capable of Reconciliation by the Sacraments of the Church, and unite thyſelf to the Head, by theſe Teſtimonies of thy Union with the Body: And, thus releaſed from the Burden of Sin, and ſupported (as thou certainly wilt be) by the inward Conſolations of God's Holy Spirit, proceed to the Exerciſe of good Works, and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.* So ſhalt thou not only avoid the Miſeries of being irreverſibly baniſhed from the Preſence of God, and *ſuffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire*; but be able with St. *Paul* to look up with a comfortable Aſſurance of that *Crown of Righteouſneſs*, which he declares to have been laid up for him, and for all them that follow the Example of his Converſion and zealous Piety. Of which Crown, its Excellency and Glory, I ſhall (as I am able of a Subject ſo far tranſcending the utmoſt human Capacity) ſay ſomething in the following Chapter.

2 Tim. iv. 8.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII. SECT. I.

The Noble Rewards of Good Men.

THAT nothing might be wanting, on God's Part, to perſuade Men to their Duty, he hath made that Duty their Happineſs. And, becauſe there is in Mankind great Variety of Tempers, ſome are more effectually moved by one, and ſome by another Paſſion; therefore he hath ſo ordered the Matter, that no Conſtitution whatſoever ſhould want Motives ſuited to work upon it. The infinite Benefits we have received from God might be ſufficient, one would imagine, to lead us to Repentance out of meer Gratitude; but every Man hath not a Temper ingenuous enough to be grateful. The Fear of Puniſhment might drive and fright Men into better Manners, but Objects of Terror Men ſtrive all they can to keep out of their Sight. Our wiſe Maſter hath therefore found another Inducement, which Men ſhould even delight to conſider, and to preſs upon themſelves: One, which meets with a Principle of human Nature, a Principle as univerſal, a ſpring as ſtrong as even Fear itſelf; grounded in the natural Love of themſelves, as that is; the Deſire, I mean, of Advantage and Happineſs. This is the Motive which now remains to be proceeded upon, and I am perfectly content, that all that went before ſhould go for nothing, if I do not make it appear, that this Maſter pays his Servants more liberally than any other; and that the Gain accruing from that Service is greater and more deſirable than any other Courſe which we can poſſibly take, or think of. And if this Profit can be made out alſo, then I hope there will be no Difficulty unanſwered, which Men in Reaſon can pretend to object againſt taking up that holy *Reſolution*, which is the

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Deſign of this Book to bring every one of its Readers over to.

Now, as God in all other Reſpects acts agreeably to the Greatneſs of his Majeſty, ſo does he eſpecially in the Inſtances of Bounty and Magnificence. Whatever we do, or can do, in his Service, is in truth a Debt, and but a poor Tribute, in compariſon of what we owe our Almighty Lord and Creator. As ſuch, it cannot pretend to any Reward. Yet ſuch is his Munificence, that he ſuffers no Man to ſerve him for Nought; he conſiders the very meaneſt and moſt inſignificant Inſtances of our Obedience
Mat. x. 42. and Love, and hath declared, that *even a Cup of cold Water given for his Sake, ſhall in no wiſe loſe its Reward.* Nay he does not only make Men large Amends for what they actually do in Regard to him, but he rewards their very Intentions and good Diſpoſitions to do him Service. He made a Tryal of *Abraham's* Faith, by commanding him to ſacrifice his dear and only Son *Iſaac*; but afterwards he contented himſelf with his Readineſs to do it, and would not permit him to do the Thing. And for that Readineſs to obey ſo trying a Command, he declares, that in
Gen. xxii. 17, 18. *that Seed of* Abraham, *all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*; *that he ſhould be multiplied as the Stars of Heaven, and the Sand which is upon the Sea-ſhore for Multitude.* When *David* had conſidered with himſelf the Indecency of building himſelf a ſtately Palace, while the Ark of his God was lodged in a mean and moveable Tabernacle, and thereupon reſolved to build him a Temple: Though this Work was, for wiſe Reaſons, reſerved for his Son, yet
2 Sam. vii. the Will in *David* was taken for the Deed; and recompenſed with a Promiſe of eſtabliſhing an everlaſting Kingdom in his Poſterity: A Promiſe which we ſee now accompliſhed in *Chriſt* and his Church. That this is the general Method of his Dealings our
Mat. xx. Lord himſelf declares, in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard; and in that other Paſſage

ehold I come, and my Reward is with me. So far Rev. xxii. 12.
God from suffering any Man's Labour to be loſt.
nd, though he do more than compenſate our ut-
oſt Pains, by the Bleſſings and manifold Benefits
ven of this preſent Life; yet is this Payment now
hand an Earneſt and Pledge only, and ſuch as
mes infinitely ſhort of that moſt liberal Retribu-
on which all his faithful Servants ſhall receive after
is Life, at the *Reſurrection of the Juſt*.

SECT. II.

Of this Reward in general.

THis future Recompence reſerved for good Men
is the Argument of my Diſcourſe in this Place.
nd, in treating of it, I ſhall enquire, what manner
Reward it is, and whether it be large enough to
untervail all that Labour and Hardſhip, which
Service of God in this World requires from us.
nd here, if we attend to thoſe Deſcriptions given
it in Scripture, we ſhall find it repreſented by a
gdom, a *Glorious*, a *Heavenly*, an *Eternal*, and a
ſt Bleſſed Kingdom. All which Titles are deſign- Mat. xxv. 2 Tim. iv. 2 Pet. i.
to denote the marvellous Greatneſs of this Re- Luke xiv.
rd. Since in this World no Monarch can be
nd ſo bountiful to the very beſt of his Servants,
to give him a *Kingdom*, in compenſation of his
vice. But if any earthly Prince were both able
diſpoſed to do all this, yet could he not beſtow
Heavenly, an *Eternal*, or a *Bleſſed Kingdom*, or
in any Degree comparable to that.

Farther yet, when St. *Paul* obſerves that *Eye hath* 1 Cor. ii. 9.
ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the
art of Man to conceive the Things, which God
h prepared for them that love him, this calls up-
us to enlarge our Thoughts, and entertain
ch higher Notions of it ſtill. We may have ſeen

many wonderfull Things in our own Days: We may have heard of many, more wonderful than we ever ſaw: We may form to our Minds Ideas of Things far exceeding all we have ever ſeen or heard. But this it ſeems is not poſſible ſo much as to be *Conceived*. How then ſhall we come to underſtand its value? *Chriſt* himſelf calls it the *hidden Manna* and ſomething which *no Man knoweth but he that receiveth it*. But ſtill, *Ex pede Herculem*, though we cannot reach its full Proportions, yet ſome Conjecture of it we may make; and by ſuch Draughts may little raiſe our Affections to the Admiration and Deſire of it; though all which the Scripture or our own Collections diſcover of it, be much inferiour to, and far diſtant from, the Greatneſs of the Thing itſelf.

Rev. ii. 17.

I have already obſerved. that the Terms uſed to expreſs this Matter import, that all who partake of it ſhall be *Kings*, *happy Kings*, moſt *happy* to all *Eternity*. Which is yet farther confirmed by its being ſtyled, a *Crown of Life*, a *Throne of Glory*, a *Paradiſe*, or a Place of Pleaſure, and a *Life everlaſting*. St. *John*, for his own and our Inſtruction and Comfort, deſcribes it by the moſt magnificent and beautiful Images, that ſenſible Things can ſuggeſt to us. He compares it to a City whoſe Buildings are of fine Gold, whoſe Walls are of precious Stones, whoſe Light is *Chriſt* himſelf, in his glorified State ſitting in the midſt, and ſhedding his bright Beams through every part of it: Whoſe Situation is by, on a River of Cryſtal, and upon whoſe Banks grows the Tree of Life, ever flouriſhing, ever bearing Fruit: In which there is no Night, where no unclean Thing can enter; and they that are thought worthy to be admitted thither, ſhall reign for ever and ever. By all which we are given to underſtand, that the Majeſty, the Glory, the Excellence of this happy State is infinite; the prime Inheritance of the Son of God, the Kingdom of

Rev. xxi. 22.

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Father, the Habitation of the Bleſſed Trinity, contrived to ſet forth in its full luſtre the Power and Glory of him, whoſe Power and Glory are endleſs and unmeaſurable: And when God intends to exert this, who can imagine what that Declaration will be?

He was pleaſed to create certain Creatures to miniſter in his Preſence, and to behold his Glory; Angels, who are Spirits of an excellent Nature far above our Comprehenſion, and infinite, almoſt, in Number, as well as glorious in Perfection. When ſome of thoſe had fallen, and degenerated from their native Beauty and Excellence, God condeſcended to frame another Creature of a far inferior Condition, to ſupply their Places. His Goodneſs formed Man out of the Duſt of the Earth, and appointed this World to entertain him for a time, during his State of diſcipline and tryal. But this Earth God created with an intention to deſtroy it again. And if in the Frame of this periſhing World he have expreſſed ſuch Power and Magnificence; the Heaven, the Earth, the Seas and every Element give ſuch aſtoniſhing Proof of the Creator's Majeſty; if that which was made in an inſtant with the ſingle Word, to endure for a little while, and only to be ſubſervient to a future and eternal State, is ſo glorious, ſo wonderful, in all its Parts; What can we ſuppoſe that Habitation, which was prepared for Eternity itſelf, ſhall be? If the Cottage of his meaneſt Servants, provided to ſhelter and ſuſtain them for a few Days only, be ſo ſtately, what is the King's own Palace, where he and his friends ſhall reign together for ever? This we muſt needs imagine, is a Work, the moſt glorious, that the Maker's Power and Wiſdom could perform; and the Power and Wiſdom of that Maker, we know, are incomparably above our Comprehenſion, and altogether infinite.

Eſth. i. The great King *Ahaſuerus*, who ruled over a Hundred and ſeven and Twenty Provinces, is ſaid to have made a Feaſt at the Palace of *Suſa*, to all his Princes and Potentates, for a Hundred and Four-ſcore Days together. The Prophet tells us, that our Iſa. xxv. 6, &c. Lord and King ſhall make a ſolemn Feaſt to all his People in his Holy Mountain; and that with ſuch Luke xii. 37. Solemnity, that even the Son of God, and Maſter of the Feaſt, ſhall condeſcend to gird himſelf, and ſerve at it. What manner of Entertainment ſhall this be? A Feaſt, not to laſt for any determinate number of Days, but Millions of Millions of Ages. A Feaſt not ſerved up by Men, but by the Angels and the very Son of God himſelf; not to diſplay the Riches of a few Provinces, but the endleſs Treaſures of the King of Kings. How glorious, how joyful, how triumphant a Feſtival ſhall that be! How ineſtimable the Bleſſedneſs of thoſe Happy Souls, who ſhall then ſit down and eat Bread in the Kingdom of God? O wretchedly Vain and Stupid Men, who are born to ſo high a Dignity, and yet cannot be prevailed upon to conſider, and deſire and eſteem, their Honour and Happineſs!

Several other Conſiderations there be, which might aſſiſt us in forming worthy Ideas of this Reward. God, for Inſtance, have furniſhed us with ſo many Conveniences and Comforts, and Pleaſures, in this Place of our Exile, this Habitation of Sinners, this Vale of Miſery, appointed only for a Seaſon of Repenting, and Weeping and Mourning, and Suffering; What will he do for us in the next Life, for the Juſt, for his Friends, in the Day of Joy, in the Solemnity of the Marriage of his Son! This hath St. *Auguſtine* very pathetically proſecuted the Argument in one of his Soliloquies. "O my Lord (ſays he) "if thou haſt provided ſo plentifully for "this vile Body of ours, and given it ſuch Advan- "ges, by the Firmament, by the Air, by the Earth, "the Sea, by Light, by Darkneſs, by cheriſh-

Solil. c. 2.

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Heat, by refreſhing Shades, by Dews, by Showers, by Winds, by Birds, by Fiſhes, by Beaſts, by Trees, by manifold Herbs, by variety of Plants, by the Miniſtry of all thy Creatures; What manner of Things, Bleſſed God! how Rich, how Great, how Good, how Innumerable are thoſe, which thou haſt prepared for the Soul in its heavenly Country, where we ſhall ſee thee Face to Face? If thou do ſo much for us in our Priſon, what wilt thou do in our Palace? If thou beſtow ſo much in this World upon Good and Bad Men promiſcuouſly, O how plentiful is thy Treaſure, which thou haſt laid up for Good Men in the Life to come? If thy Enemies and Friends together enjoy ſo much here below; What ſhall thy Friends, when ſeparated from thoſe Enemies, what ſhall they not receive above? If the Days of Faſting and Mourning have ſuch Conſolation, what ſhall be the rejoicing of this Marriage Feaſt? O my Lord! thou art a great God, and great is thy Magnificence, and ſweet is thy Mercy. And, as there is no end of thy Greatneſs, no number of thy Mercies, no bottom of thy profound Wiſdom, no meaſure of thy Liberality; ſo neither is there any Number, any Meaſure, of the Depth, and Length, and Greatneſs, and moſt diffuſive Extent of the Rewards laid up for them, that Love, and Fight for thee."

Another help towards conceiving ſome part of this eward in the next Life, would be to remember, nd diligently conſider the manifold Promiſes of lmighty God, to exalt and dignify all that love nd ſerve him. *Them that Honour me*, ſays he, *I will Honour*. And *David* breaks out into terms of Admiation, as if this could not be particularly expreſt, *uch Honour have all his Saints*. But *David* would have ad much greater Reaſon for his Wonder, had he ved under the New Teſtament, and heard that romiſe of Chriſt, that his Servants ſhould ſit down nd Eat, and he himſelf would ſerve them in the

1 Sam. ii. 30.

Pſ. cxlix. 9. Luke xii. 37. Mat. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 29, 30.

1 Cor. vi. 3. Kingdom of his Father; that *they ſhall ſit in Judgment with him, and judge not only Men but even Angels too.* And not only ſo, but this Honour may be in ſome ſort conceived, by that which he ſometimes does to his Servants in this Life, which yet is a State, wherein he places them to meet with Contempt, and not with Honour. How great was the Honour done to *Abraham*, before ſo many Kings; and that to *Moſes* in *Pharaoh*'s Court; and that to *Joſhua*, when the Sun and Moon ſtood ſtill at his Command; and that to *Iſaiah*, when the Shadow went back Ten Degrees by his Word; and that to *Elijah*, when the Heavens were opened and ſhut at his Determination; and to *Eliſha*, when he cured a Leproſy by his Word, and raiſed a dead Man to Life, and when his very Bones, long after his Death, wrought the ſame Miracle? And to name no more, to the Apoſtles of our Bleſſed Lord, who healed the Infirmities of all they laid their Hands upon, of all to whom the Handkerchiefs of St. *Paul* was brought, of as many as the Shadow of St. *Peter*, as he paſs'd by, fell upon. What Reverence, what Admiration did theſe holy Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apoſtles find, in the preſence of *Melchiſedech*, and *Abimelech*, and *Pharaoh*, and the Armies of *Iſrael*, and *Hezekiah*, and *Ahab*, and *Naaman*, and the wondering Jews and Gentiles? Could ever any Prince upon Earth, boaſt of ſuch Reſpect, ſuch Conqueſts? And if Chriſt ſo eminently diſtinguiſh'd his Servants in this World, of *which* notwithſtanding *his Kingdom was not*; what Dignities, what Trophies muſt we ſuppoſe he hath reſerved for them in the other World, where his Kingdom is in perfect fulneſs, and where every Servant of his ſhall be crowned as an eternal King to reign in Conjunction with him?

Gen. xii. 14, 20. Exod. vii. &c. Joſhua x. Iſ. xxxviii. 1 Kings xviii. 2 Kin. iv. 5. and 13. Acts v. Acts xix.

Once more: Some have framed notions of this incomparable Bliſs, from the three different Receptacles, ordained for Man; though it muſt be allowed

ed, that there is no neceſſity of any Thing like an exact Proportion between them. The firſt is our Mother's Womb; The Second this preſent World; The Third the Regions of Bliſs above. Now theſe (ſay they) muſt ſo far reſemble each other, that the Laſt ſhould excel the Second, as much as the Second manifeſtly does the Firſt: Nay, as much more, as Heavenly and Eternal Things exceed the beſt and greateſt of thoſe that are Temporal and Tranſitory. So that, as much as the whole World is more capacious and delightful, than the Priſon which encloſes us before our Birth; no leſs are the Beauty, the Pleaſures, the Majeſty of our Heavenly Habitation, preferable to thoſe of our preſent State. As far as a Man exceeds an unborn Child, in Strength, Comelineſs, Underſtanding, and all both natural and acquired Accompliſhments, ſo much and a great deal more do the glorified Saints exceed the moſt perfect of mortal Men. And one of theſe would no more be content to return from that bliſsful condition to the moſt exquiſite Degree of what miſtaken Men call Happineſs here upon Earth, than the beſt of Men would be ſatisfied to be reduced to an Embryo. The few Months in which that Embryo grows to maturity for the Birth, are yet much more conſiderable, when compared with the longeſt Life upon Earth, than that longeſt Life can pretend to be in compariſon of Eternity. The Blindneſs, the Weakneſs, the Ignorance of that unborn Child, are not ſo much beneath the Vigor, the Knowledge of the ſtouteſt and moſt learned Man, as the Darkneſs, the Folly, and other Calamities of this Life keep us short of that clear Light, and unerring Knowledge, that ſtable and never decaying State, and the other yet unknown Privileges of the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect. So that, upon the whole Matter, ſomething we may know concerning this Bliſs; and from theſe, and other ſuch like Conſiderations, ſome general Conjectures may be framed; which, though

confuſed and dark, are yet ſufficient to raiſe our Notions of, and vehemently to excite our Affections for, that infinite and incomprehenſibly excellent Reward of which I am now diſcourſing.

SECT. III.

The Felicity of Body and Soul in Heaven.

I Shall now proceed to conſider this Matter ſomewhat more particularly, under two Heads; as this Reward extendeth itſelf to the Bodies or to the Souls, of thoſe who partake of it. And here *firſt* with regard to the Body, I ſhall not follow the ſubtle Notions of nice and fanciful Men, who buſily intrude into Things which they have not ſeen. It is enough for my preſent purpoſe, that the Scripture hath told us, this Fleſh at the general Reſurrection ſhall be changed and glorified; that what, like Seed is caſt into the Ground *a Natural*, ſhall come up *Spiritual Body*; what *is ſown in weakneſs, ſhall be raiſed in Power*; what *is ſown in Corruption, ſhall be raiſed in Incorruption*; that *this Mortal ſhall put on Immortality*; that *Chriſt ſhall change our vile Body and faſhion it according to his glorious Body, according to the mighty Working whereby he is able to ſubdue all Things unto himſelf*. The meaning of all which, to be ſure, amounts to thus much; That this Load of Fleſh, which is now ſo cumberſome and preſſes down the Mind, ſhall then ceaſe to obſtruct its nobleſt Operations, or any more to be a Burthen to us; That we ſhall then put off all thoſe Paſſions, which now ruffle and diſcompoſe us, and every ſenſual Appetite, by which at preſent we are tempted to, and inſnared in Sin: That this Mortal now ſubject to ſo many Inconveniences, liable to ſo many Alterations, afflicted with ſo many Diſeaſes defiled with ſo many Corruptions, beſet with

1 Cor. xv.

Phil. iii. 21.

man

many Miſeries, ſhall then be placed above the reach of Calamity or Change, Diſtemper or Decay, made as Glorious and Perfect, as the nature of the Thing will admit; and, thus refined and exalted, ſhall endure for ever in moſt exquiſite Beauty and Vigour. And theſe are all ſuch Ornaments and Advantages, as Men would eſteem it a mighty Bleſſing to attain to any moderate Proportion of, during their Continuance in this World. And therefore, if we truly love our Bodies, methinks we ſhould ſhew it in being ſolicitous to gain them all together in the higheſt Degree, in that everlaſting Life which is to come.

But, as great and valuable as this Happineſs is, it is ſcarce worthy to be named with that other Part of our Reward, wherein the Soul is more immediately concerned. Here lies the true Excellence, and the very Eſſence of our Bleſſedneſs. For this Part is properly the Man, and therefore the chief Good, of which human Nature is capable, muſt needs conſiſt in the advancing this to its utmoſt poſſible Perfection. And ſuch is the Knowledge and Sight of God, the Sum and Source of all Good. *This* (ſays our Bleſſed Lord) *is Life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and* Jeſus Chriſt *whom thou haſt ſent.* John xvii. 3. And St. *Paul*, *We know in part, and we propheſy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part ſhall be done away. And now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face, and ſhall know even as we are known.* 1 Cor. xiii. 9, &c. To the ſame purpoſe St. *John* places the Happineſs of the Bleſſed, and the ground of their being drawn into a Reſemblance of the Divine Excellencies in this, that then *they ſhall ſee God as he is.* 1 John. iii. 2. The Reaſon whereof is, that all the Delights of this World are but very ſmall Particles of God's incomprehenſible Happineſs; the Crumbs as it were, that fall from his Table; That, as all theſe are derived from him, ſo are they united and contained in him, much more eminently and abſolutely

ſolutely than they are imparted to any Creature whatſoever: And conſequently, the proper Perfections of all Creatures are much more fully in God, than they are, or can be, in thoſe very Creatures, whoſe Perfections they are.

Now the neceſſary Conſequence of this is, that whoſoever is admitted to the Preſence and Viſion of Almighty God, the Author and Fountain of all Pleaſures, muſt there find all the Goodneſs of all worldly Things compacted together, and meeting there, as Lines in the common Center, from whence they all are drawn. So that, whatſoever can poſſibly create true Delight, whether of Body or Mind, here he enjoys the whole with the higheſt Satisfaction, and moſt tranſporting Raptures both of Body and Mind. No Man can imagine, or wiſh for any Joy, which he ſhall not find here in its full Perfection. All Knowledge, and Wiſdom, and Beauty, and Plenty, and Pleaſure, and all that can contribute to his Content, and all that can attract his Love, or raiſe his Admiration. There every Faculty of the Mind ſhall be exerciſed, its moſt large and capacious Extent filled, its nobleſt and moſt eager Deſires gratified: There every Senſe ſhall be moſt pleaſingly entertained. God ſhall be Light to our Eyes, Muſick to our Ears, Honey to our Taſte, and Perfume to our Smell, Knowledge to our Underſtanding, Acquieſcence to our Will, and perpetual Preſence to our Memory. In him we ſhall have all the grateful Variety that delights us here, all the Beauty that allures us here, all the Pleaſure that charms us here. Thus ſhall He be all in all; the univerſal Felicity of every Saint containing in himſelf alone every Ingredient of every particular Felicity, without End, or Number, or Meaſure. "In this Viſion of God (ſays a pious Author) "we ſhall know, we ſhall love, we ſhall rejoice, we ſhall praiſe. We ſhall ſee the Myſteries and Judgments of the Almighty, which are a bottomleſs Ocean: The Cauſes, the Natures, the

Aug. *de Anim.* 4. *cap.* 15.

"Begin

" Beginning, the End of every Creature. We ſhall
" love unmeaſurably; God, for the infinite attra-
" ctives of Love, which we ſhall diſcover in him;
" our Brethren, as much as our ſelves, becauſe we ſee
" God love them as much as our ſelves, and for the
" ſame Reaſons which diſpoſe him to love us. We
" ſhall rejoice beyond Meaſure; for every thing we
" love in God will be matter of Joy to us, and theſe
" Motives are infinite; We ſhall rejoice in our Bre-
" thren's Happineſs. as in our own, and ſo ſhall
" have as many diſtinct Cauſes of Joy, as we have
" Partakers in our Bliſs; and, ſince theſe are infi-
" nite, no wonder if our Maſter chuſe to ſay, *En-*
" *ter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*, rather than, *Let*
" *thy Lord's Joy enter into thee*; for no created
" Heart is large enough to receive the fulneſs of
" this Joy. And then we muſt needs, if this be our
" Caſe, praiſe God indefatigably, inceſſantly, with
" all our Heart, and all our Strength, with every
" Power and Part capable of it, according to that
" of the Pſalmiſt; *Bleſſed are they who dwell in thy*
" *Houſe, they will be always praiſing thee.*

I conclude this Argument with a Reflection of St. *Auguſtin* to the ſame purpoſe. " Our Lord declares
" the *pure in Heart bleſſed*, upon this Account, *that*
" *they ſhall ſee God.* From whence we may learn
" that there is a ſight of God, capable of making
" Men happy. A ſight which no Eye hath ſeen in
" this World, nor Heart conceived. A Proſpect, far
" ſurpaſſing the Beauty of all Earthly Things, Gold,
" Silver, and precious Stones, Woods, and Fields,
" and Seas; Air and Firmament, Sun and Moon,
" and Stars, and even Angels; for all theſe derive
" their Beauty from hence. *We ſhall ſee him Face to*
" *Face*, ſays his Apoſtle, *and we ſhall know him as we*
" *are known.* We ſhall know the Power of the Fa-
" ther, the Wiſdom of the Son, the Goodneſs of
" the Holy Ghoſt, the indiviſible Nature of the
" Bleſſed Trinity. Now this very *ſeeing the Face of*

Tract 4. *in* 1 *Ep. Joan.* & *Soliloq.*

" *God*

" *God* is the Joy of the Bleſſed Angels; their ever-
" laſting Delight, their Crown of Honour, their
" Aim and Reſt, their inward and outward Conſo-
" lation, their pleaſurable Paradiſe, their Heaven-
" ly *Jeruſalem*, their fulneſs of Bliſs, their eternal
Phil. iv. 7. " Triumph, their precious *Peace of God which paſ-*
" *ſeth all Underſtanding*. This is the complete Bea-
" titude of Glorified Spirits, to behold him that
" made Heaven and Earth, him that Created thee,
" Redeemed thee, Glorified thee. For in ſeeing
" him thou ſhalt know him; in knowing him thou
" ſhalt love him; in loving him thou ſhalt poſſeſs
" him; in poſſeſſing him thou ſhalt praiſe him; and
" in praiſing him thou ſhalt employ thy whole Eter-
" nity. For He is the Inheritance of his People;
" the Felicity of his Choſen, the Reward of their
Gen. xv. 1. " Expectation. *I will be thy exceeding great Reward*,
" ſays he to *Abraham*. O Lord, thou art indeed
" exceeding great in thy ſelf, and therefore thou
" mayſt well be thy Servants exceeding great Re-
" ward." The ſight of thee then is all our Wages,
all our Recompence, all the Joy and Felicity we can
hope or have; for thou thy ſelf haſt ſaid it, *This is*
Joh. xvii. 3. *Life Eternal, to know thee the only true God, and*
Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.

SECT. IV.

Some Circumſtances increaſing the Joys of Heaven.

HAving thus obſerved wherein our Happineſs hereafter, as it relates to each part of us, does ſtrictly and properly conſiſt; it cannot ſure be hard to conceive, that the Joy reſulting from hence muſt needs be exceeding great, in that bleſſed Day when we ſhall be tranſlated thither. Let us hear St. *Auguſtine* once more breathing out his Senſe of it in thoſe moſt affectionate Expreſſions, " O Joy, above
Aug. *Soliloq. c.* 35. " Joys, and without which there is no Joy! Where
" ſha

" ſhall I enter into thee? When ſhall I poſſeſs thee,
" to ſee my God, that dwelleth in thee? O ever-
" laſting Kingdom! O Light Eternal! *O Peace of*
" *God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding! wherein the*
" *Souls of Saints do reſt with thee, O Lord; where*
" *everlaſting gladneſs is upon their Heads, and Sorrow*
" *and Pain are fled far from them!* How glorious a
" Kingdom is thine, my God and Saviour, where
" every Servant of thine ſits in State with thee, deck-
" ed with Light as with a Garment, and crowned
" with Bliſs as with precious Stones; where thou
" thy ſelf art preſent, the Hope of the faithful, the
" Diadem of their everlaſting Glory, filling every
" Senſe with raviſhing Comforts, by thy Bleſſed
" Sight! In this Kingdom of thine, deareſt Lord,
" is Mirth without Sadneſs, Health without Sick-
" neſs, Life without Labour, Light without Dark-
" neſs, Happineſs without Abatement, Goodneſs
" without Evil, Youth that never waxeth old,
" Strength that never decayeth, Beauty that never
" fadeth, Love that never cooleth, Joy that never
" ceaſeth. Here Pain is never felt, Complaint ne-
" ver heard, matter of Grief never ſeen, Diſaſters
" and Diſapointments never feared. And all, be-
" cauſe they have the Fruition of thee, O Lord,
" who art the Fulneſs and Perfection of all Felici-
" ty!" Would we, who live in theſe Days, and read theſe zealous Meditations, employ our Thoughts as this holy Man did, we ſhould no doubt feel our ſelves more inflamed with ardent Love, and impatient Deſires of this heavenly Bliſs: We ſhould contend more earneſtly for the obtaining it, than now, alas! we do.

Now for the kindling theſe Affections in our Souls, and quickning them up to ſome better Senſe of this Matter; let us conſider a little, how joyful a Day that will be with us, when, after having finiſhed our Courſe, and paſſed the time of our Sojourning here in the fear of God, Death ſhall tranſlate us from

Miſery and Labour to Life and Immortality; when at that Hour, which others tremble at the very Thought of, we ſhall lift up our Heads in hope, becauſe the *time of our Redemption draweth nigh*: When the Priſon-doors ſhall be opened, and the Soul ſhall march up in Triumph, conducted by the bleſſed Angels to its Father's Manſions, and received there by all thoſe Orders of the heavenly Hierarchy mentioned in Scripture. All theſe rejoiced at our Converſion, and all ſhall aſſiſt with Gladneſs at our Coronation. O! what a Day of Jubilee will that be to us, when we ſhall be preſented in full Court before the Throne of the moſt High, with a recital of the Good we have chearfully done, and the Evils we have patiently ſuffer'd, for the Love and Service of Almighty God: When all our Virtuous Actions, all our Alms and Prayers, all our Watchings and Faſtings, all our holy Labours for the Good of others, all our Patience and Charity in bearing and forgiving Injuries and Affronts, our Conſtancy in Adverſity, our Moderation in Proſperity, our Sobriety and Temperance, our Innocence and Purity, all ſhall be remembred, commended, rewarded; and not one Circumſtance forgotten, which may tend to our Advantage! Shall we not then, think you, be convinced of the Wiſdom of Godlineſs? that this is the great, the only true Gain? Shall we not then, ten thouſand times over, bleſs that happy Hour, when we reſolved to break looſe from the miſerable Bondage of Sin, and the World, and bound our ſelves to that Service which is perfect Freedom? Shall we not then think our ſelves moſt highly obliged by them, who ſhewed us the Error of our Ways; and be thankful for thoſe Admonitions, Reproofs, or Corrections, which brought us firſt to make that Reſolution? Yes doubtleſs. Then we ſhall value the Miniſters of God as they deſerve, and be convinced that they only were our true Friends, who would not flatter us in our Follies; and, that the Impatience

nd Uneaſineſs, which any good Offices done to urſelves were formerly entertained with, proceed-d from our blindneſs and inſenſibility of our true Happineſs: And that none ever loved us ſo well, s they, who rather than ſee us periſh everlaſtingly, would venture to diſpleaſe us, by bold but neceſſary Truths. But farther yet.

When we ſhall look behind us, and reflect, what ſecure Haven we have at laſt put into; how many Storms and Dangers we have paſſed, in which others re ſtill toſſing, and in hazard of their Safety; our Satisfaction muſt needs receive great increaſe by this omfortable Thought. Then ſhall we clearly diſcern he infinite Snares and Precipices we have got over; nd how often we ſhould certainly have periſhed in ur Paſſage, had not the hand of God ſuſtained our Weakneſs, and reſcued us from thoſe Difficulties, which we were not of ourſelves a Match for. Then hall we ſee the doubtful Conflicts of them who ſtill urvive; the Death and Damnation, which many of ur Friends and Acquaintance have plunged them-elves into; the Howlings, and bitter Pains which hey now lye in, whoſe Wit and Humour uſed once o make their company merry. All which, compa-ed with our own better Lot, ſhall raiſe our Senſe nd Value of it. Then, my Soul, for thy own part, hou mayeſt reſt ſecure. There is no more need then f Fear, or Labour, or Care: No occaſion for ſleep-ng in Arms, but theſe may all be laid aſide as uſe-eſs; ſince thou haſt no more Enemies to aſſault thee, o more crafty Serpent to beguile thee, no more reacherous Heart to betray thee, but all is Safe-y, Peace, and Pleaſure: Mortification and Abſti-ence, and chaſtiſing thy Body, and ſtruggling with Difficulties and Temptations, ſubduing of Paſſions, nd conflicting with fleſhly and ſenſual Appetites, ave now had their perfect Work. There is a obler and more delightful Exerciſe prepared to ucceed in their ſtead. Rejoicing and Triumphing,

and

and ſinging *Hallelujahs* to that Lamb, who ſhed hi Blood to bring thee to this Bleſſedneſs, and will pre ſerve thee in it to all Eternity.

Again, Think what tranſporting Comfort it wil be, at that Day, to behold that Holy Lamb, ſitting in Majeſty upon his Royal Throne. If the Thre Wiſe Men came ſo far out of the Eaſt, and rejoice exceedingly to ſee a ſpeechleſs Infant lying in a Man ger, what a Satisfaction will it be to ſee this onc Weak and Poor, this deſpiſed and crucified *Jeſus* triumphant over His, and our Spiritual Enemies If St. *John Baptiſt* leaped in his Mother's Womb when this yet unborn Child approached him, wha Raptures ſhall his glorious Preſence excite in hi eternal Kingdom? "This (ſays St. *Auguſtine*) i "the top of all that Happineſs enjoyed by the Saint "in Heaven, to be admitted to the ſight of *Chri* "in his Glory, and to receive the Beams of Glor "ſhed abroad by the Splendor of his Majeſty. And "if we are to be afflicted every Day; nay to un "dergo the very Torments of Hell for a Seaſon "thus to be numbred among the Saints in Glor "everlaſting, thus to gain the Sight of, and be ſu "fered to approach our Lord in Heaven, were "Reward ſo valuable, that even thoſe Pains are t "be eſteemed as nothing in compariſon of it." O that we made the ſame juſt account of this Ble ſedneſs! For there only wants a true eſtimate o our Privileges hereafter, to prevent Mens livin as they now do, and loſing thoſe ineſtimable Advan tages, for ſuch wretched Trifles in Exchange, a the Children of this World are ſottiſhly content t barter them away for.

Serm. 27. *de Sanct.*

But ſtill I have not done (and indeed in this Ar gument it is not ſo eaſy to make an end:) Imagin then once more, what a Pleaſure it ſhall be at tha Day, to meet with all thy old Friends, who are re ceived into that bleſſed Place: Thy Father, thy Mo ther, thy Huſband or Wife, thy Brothers and Siſter

y Kindred and Neighbours, thy intimate Acquain-
nce, and moſt beloved Companions: O! the Mirth,
e mutual Welcomes, the ſweet Embraces, that
all be there upon this Occaſion! All which St. *Cy-*
an hath piouſly expreſt: "Who is there (ſays he)
that after a long and perilous Voyage is not tran-
ſported with the very Thought of returning to
his own Countrey and old Friends? Now Heaven,
my Chriſtian Brethren, is our own Countrey;
and the Inhabitants of that bleſſed Place, are our
Friends and Relations: How comes it then to
paſs, that we are not more eager to meet and em-
brace them? In Heaven we have Parents, and
Children, and Kinſmen without number; at di-
ſtant removes, thoſe that have ſprung from us,
and thoſe from whom we have ſprung, whom here
we never knew: There we may have many Ac-
quaintance and dear Friends, wiſhing and waiting
for our ſafe Arrival. What a Satisfaction will it
be to them and us, to meet, and embrace, and ſo-
lace ourſelves together? How inconparably ſweet
will the Delight be, to have met once again, never
to part any more; to enjoy each other, and Love
and Reign together, where Eternity of Life ſhall
receive no allay from any fear of Death?" This
sfaction too, great as it is, ſhall yet be continually
eaſed by the daily freſh Arrival of new Kindred
Friends, bringing along with them the Spoils of
Enemies vanquiſhed in their Conflicts, during
mortal Life: And what a comfortable Sight will
to ſee thoſe Seats of fallen Angels ſupplied with
Recruits of Men; to obſerve the Crowns of
ry upon their Heads, in a beautiful Variety, pro-
ionable to the Quality of their Combats and their
queſts? Some for Martyrdom and Conſtancy un-
Perſecution, others for Mortification and Chaſti-
others for Poverty and Patience, others for Humi-
and Meekneſs; All, according to the different
of Victory, obtained by them in the Fleſh. And

ſelf? All the Riches and Glory that Heaven contains, ſhall be beſtowed to make him happy. And who would not value this Inheritance? Who would not be at ſome Pains to gain it? eſpecially when aſſured, that our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord; but even the meaneſt and moſt miſerable Man upon Earth may, if he pleaſe, exalt himſelf to this Royal Dignity? Why then ſhould we ſlight our own Mercy and Happineſs? Why ſhould we not make this wiſe Bargain, when dealing with one who neither will, nor can deceive us? Nothing can be a greater Grief to him that died for us, than that we ſhould not reap the Benefits of his Death: Nothing more ungrateful to him who offers ſo vaſt a Treaſure at ſo reaſonable a Price, than that we ſhould purchaſe the Pains of Hell, at a greater Expence, than Heaven and eternal Joys with good Management would coſt us. O incredible Liberality in the kind Offer! O moſt unaccountable Madneſs and Folly in the obſtinate Refuſer!

Follow not then the Frenzy and Dotage of worldly Wiſdom, nor partake with the Wicked in their fatal Error. For the Day will come when they ſhall dearly repent, and ſmart, for their preverſeneſs, and thou ſhalt eſteem thyſelf moſt happy in diſſenting from them. Let them ſquander away their precious time in Vanities, the ſinful and fugitive Delights of this periſhing Life; let them build ſtately Palaces, aſpire greedily after Honours; add Field to Field, and heap up thick Clay; This is but building Caſtles in the Air; and their ſhort-liv'd appearances of Happineſs are not worth thy Envy. If they diſparage the Riches of God and the Honour of his Saints at preſent, and cannot entertain any lofty Ideas of that Happineſs, in which carnal Pleaſures have no Part, marvel not at the matter; for theſe Things are not of a ſize with their Capacity, nor ſuited to their depraved Affections. A Heart can have no Notion of any Entertainment above

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Provender and Water; and the ſenſual Man, who in this Reſpect hath degenerated into a Brute, can as little underſtand the Things that be of God. But thou haſt been taught to raiſe thy Thoughts up to loftier Matters, and the only Qualification farther needful is to endeavour after them.

For it muſt always be remembred, that this Kingdom of God is never to be found of them that ſeek it not. It is the Prize at the Goal; but the Prize is only for them that run. It is the Crown of Glory, but none can be crowned, except ſuch as fight. Obſerve the Condition propoſed by the Maſter of the Combat: *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord,* Mat. vii. *Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he* 21. *that doeth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* This Kingdom is offered to all, but they who are content to ſuffer with *Chriſt* are the Perſons that 2 Tim. ii. 12. ſhall reign with him. Conſider then the greatneſs of this Treaſure, but conſider it ſo, as not to mistake the Methods of obtaining it; and this can only be by a Virtuous and Godly Life. Sit down then, and according to our Lord's Advice, compute the Coſt, whether thou have the Heart, and the Purſe, to buy this Pearl of great Price; whether thy Strength ſufficient to engage in this War or no. My meaning is, Whether thou art ſtedfaſtly reſolved, and fully determined, to get Heaven at any rate, and think it a Good Bargain upon the Terms of forſaking all Sin, and leading a godly, righteous, and ſober Life in this preſent World. This is the ſingle Point upon which thy Succeſs will turn at laſt. And all the former Chapters are intended for this very Purpoſe, that thou ſhouldſt take right Meaſures, anſwer the end of thy Creation, and firmly ſet thyſelf not to loſe that by Negligence, which can never be retrieved, and which, if thou do loſe, Ten thouſand times better were it for thee that thou hadſt never been Born.

If then the Love of God, if the Love of thy ſelf, have any Power to influence thy Will, ſhake off that dangerous Security, with which Fleſh and Blood ſo frequently ſtupifies Worldly and Senſual Minds. Have regard to thy future and everlaſting State, and whatever becomes of this Tranſitory one, reſolve to ſecure that. Conſider, that Eternity depends on this ſhort Moment, and if our Life be but a Moment, and yet a Moment of ſuch vaſt Importance, think what a madneſs it is, to trifle it away in an unthinking careleſs way of Living. Thou canſt not want Remembrancers of thy Duty. All the Creatures of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell, are Motives, are Books, are Sermons and Exhortations to thee, ſome by their Glory, ſome by their Puniſhment, ſome by their Beauty, all by their Creation they loudly and with one Voice declare, that thou wert not ſent into the World for nothing; that thou art bound to do the Works of him that ſent thee; that all is Vanity, and Folly, and Miſery except only the Service of thy Lord and Maſter. And with this Admonition I will conclude this Firſt Part of my Treatiſe; reſerving for the Second my Anſwers to ſome Objections and Impediments, uſually alledged in Bar to this Holy *Reſolution*. In the mean while, I moſt heartily beſeech our Lord and Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*, who did not diſdain to ſhed his own moſt precious Blood for the purchaſing the Inheritance and Kingdom for us; that he would be pleaſed to give us his Grace, that ſo we may value it as it deſerves, and labour for it ſo zealouſly, ſo ſucceſsfully, that the Obſervation of the Wiſe man be not laid to our Charge at the laſt Day, nor we reproached with having *ſo noble a Price put in the Hands of Fools in vain, ſeeing we had not the Heart to uſe it.*

Prov. xvii. 16.

The End of the Firſt Part.

A TREATISE Concerning HOLY RESOLUTION.

PART II.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the former Part of this Book I have propoſed to my Reader ſeveral mighty Conſiderations, in order to excite in him a firm Reſolution of ſerving God. And, in regard that very Service is perfect Freedom, and the very nature of Virtue, ſuch as will attract the Love and Admiration of reaſonable and unprejudic'd Minds; I might hope, that this, back'd with the Inducements already mention'd, would be ſufficient effectually to win Men to Goodneſs, were it not that we have a ſubtle and dangerous Enemy to deal with. One, who even after our Judgments are convinced, does not give up the Cauſe, but finds Means ſometimes to ſeduce our Wills, and hinder our chuſing thoſe Methods, which yet we are very ſenſible are fit and to be taken. Thus, when the Excellency of heavenly and ſpiritual Wiſdom ſhines in upon our Understandings in its brighteſt Luſtre, and diſcovers the Va-

nities of a ſinful, and the Advantages of a godly Life:
This cunning Adverſary diſſuades ſuch a Change, ei-
ther by repreſenting the Difficulty of obtaining Pardon
for our paſt Sins; or by magnifying the Hardſhips of
Virtue and Piety; or by affrighting us with the Loſs
of the Pleaſures and Advantages of this preſent Life;
or by ſome other trifling Deluſion; which though of no
real Weight in itſelf, yet, falling in with the Inclinati-
ons and Infirmities of our preſent State, ſeems in the
partial Eye of Fleſh and Blood, to carry a great deal
in it. Thus he labours either wholly to divert and drive
us from our good Reſolution, or elſe to keep it off and
hold us in ſuſpence; and either way, if he ſucceed, his
Purpoſe of ruining us takes effect. Now, for the better
preventing theſe ſubtle and malicious Attempts, my
Deſign is, in the following Chapters, to conſider the
principal Hindrances, which uſe to keep Men off from
this neceſſary Undertaking; and I hope ſo to detect the
Sophiſtry of thoſe vain Pretences, as to bring Men to a
right Senſe of their own Condition, and to arm them
againſt the treacherous Inſinuations of their ſpiritual
Adverſary. For I am much inclined to promiſe myſelf
that the Matters treated of here may, with careful
Peruſal and ſincere Application, contribute greatly to
the Profit and Satisfaction of my Readers, and be
confirm and comfort them in their good Intentions of
advancing and perſevering to the End, in thoſe Ways
which the former Part, I would fain preſume, have
ſatisfied them, are undoubtedly the right, the only
Paths to Happineſs.

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CHAP. I. SECT. I.

Of the First Obstruction to Holy Resolution; Distrust of God's Mercy upon the Account of the Greatness or Number of our Sins.

AS one of the most powerful Seducements to Sin, is presuming upon Mercy and Pardon; so one of the most dangerous Temptations to continue in a sinful Course, is a Distrust of God's Mercy, and Despair of that Pardon. A most uncomfortable State of Mind, to which the Devil labours to drive Men, when their Consciences reproach them, and they feel a dead Weight of Guilt lie heavy upon their Minds. Such was the Case of *Cain*, who, upon the Murder of his Brother, and a Sense of that Vengeance, for which that Blood cried loud against him, broke out into that horrid Complaint, *My Iniquity is greater than can be forgiven.* Such that of *Judas*, who, declaring his Sin in betraying his innocent Master, found no other Course of redressing the Misery he lay under, than that of destroying himself for Grief. A Refuge more displeasing, more injurious, to that merciful Saviour he had betrayed, than even that Treachery was, which delivered him up into the Hands of those Enemies who sought his Life. Upon this Rock sometimes God suffers wicked Souls to suffer shipwreck; and leaves them to all the Terrors of his Threatnings, and their own Wickedness: So in his just Judgment punishing one Sin with another. And wretched indeed is the Condition of such hardened Miscreants; for this Despair plunges them into all manner of Evil; it stops the Influences

Gen. iv. 13. *marg.* Mat. xxvii.

ces of Divine Grace, and cuts in ſunder thoſe Cords of Love, by which God draws Men to himſelf; it repreſents Repentance and Amendment, as Remedies that come too late, and cannot be applied with any Effect, and abandons the Sinner to the Commiſſion of all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs.

Now nothing can be a higher Provocation, than to offend upon this Principle; becauſe it robs God of that beloved Attribute, in which he principally delights, his boundleſs Mercy and Goodneſs: It repreſents him to be a Powerful Being, but withal Implacable and Fierce; ſuch as takes pleaſure in the Deſtruction of his Creatures, and is not to be appeaſed with any, though never ſo ſincere and deep, Sorrow for Offences paſt. It were eaſy to ſhew the ill Conſequences of this Diſpoſition, and how heinouſly God reſents it; how ſolemnly he diſclaims the Ground on which it proceeds, from ſundry Paſſages of Holy Writ. But at preſent I ſhall content myſelf with inſtancing in Two only.

The firſt is that of *Jeremiah*, not long before the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, when the People, terrified with their own grievous Sins, and the dreadful Puniſhments denounced againſt them, reſolved not to quit their former Abominations, upon this impious Thought, that Reformation could be no Advantage to them. *They ſaid, There is no Hope, but we will walk after our own Devices, and we will every one do the Imagination of his evil Heart.* Where-upon God upbraids them with a Degree of Impiety, worſe than even the Pagan World had been guilty of. *Aſk ye now among the Heathen, who hath heard ſuch Things?* And for their better Information in this Matter, he explains to them the Nature of his Proceedings, and the true Importance of his Threatnings, by the Parable of a Potter framing a Veſſel that had been ſpoiled under his Hands, into another Veſſel,

Jer. xviii. 12.

Veſſel, according as the Stuff would bear, and his own Prudence directed. The Application of which Parable there is as follows: *O Houſe of Iſrael, Cannot I do with you as this Potter?* ſaith the Lord; that is, keep you from being utterly loſt, and of no Uſe at all. *Behold! as the Clay is in the Potter's Hand, ſo are ye in my Hand, O Houſe of Iſrael. At what time I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; if that Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.* And then, in the following Parts of that Chapter, he expreſſes his juſt Indignation againſt ſuch unreaſonable Men, as look upon their Caſe to be paſt Remedy, and ſuppoſe the Threatnings, iſſued out on purpoſe to drive them to Amendment, impoſſible to be eſcaped, even tho' they ſhould amend; thus imagining the God and Creator of Men a Being never to be appeaſed, and a Hater of the Work of his own Hands.

The Second Inſtance is of the ſame People again, at another Time, and under the Inſtruction of another Prophet. They languiſhed under their Afflictions during the Time of their Exile, and laboured under ſad Apprehenſions of more and greater Miſeries, which diſcouraged them from a Change of their former wicked Courſes. *Thus they ſpoke, ſaying, If our Tranſgreſſions and our Sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how then ſhould we live?* For the taking off this Objection, God ſends the Prophet Ezekiel to them with this ſupporting Meſſage: *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no Pleaſure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways, for why will ye die, O Houſe of Iſrael? When I ſay unto the Wicked, Thou ſhalt ſurely die; if he turn from his Sins, and do that which is lawful and right, none of his Sins that he hath committed ſhall be mentioned againſt him: he hath done that which is lawful and right,*

Ezek. xxxiii.

ver. 10, 11, 12.

ver. 14, 16.

right, he ſhall ſurely live. Now though this might ſuffice to remove this *firſt* Obſtruction, by proving that even the moſt expreſs Sentence of Death and Damnation ſhall not take place againſt thoſe, who improve the Conſideration of their Danger into an Occaſion of ſerious and effectual Reformation of Manners; and conſequently that none have Reaſon to diſtruſt of Mercy, but they only who will not qualify themſelves for it by Amendment of Life. Yet for the clearer Evidence of this Matter, and the greater Comfort of thoſe who are oppreſſed with the heavy Burden of their Sins, I ſhall chuſe to enlarge a little upon this Subject, and ſhew, that no Time, no State, no Age, no Degree of Guilt is excluded from the Mercy of God, provided Men do truly and in good earneſt repent: That, conſequently all, without Exception, may apply to themſelves that Promiſe, *Turn ye, and ye ſhall live.* And this is what I hope to make good in the following Particulars.

SECT. II.

The Nature of God's Love to Mankind.

Firſt then, we may form to ourſelves a juſt Idea of this Mercy and Readineſs to forgive, by the incomprehenſible Love of God to Mankind. For Love will always diſpoſe the Perſon affected with it, to ſpare and pardon the Faults and Failings of the Party beloved, in proportion as he is dear to the Perſon ſo offended. What this Love of God is in itſelf, we are not indeed able to conceive, but we may reaſonably conjecture the Greatneſs of the Cauſe, from the Greatneſs of its Effects; and judge of the Depth of the Fountain, by the Streams which we ſee flow from it. Now the proper Effects of Love, are good Offices and Acts of Kindneſs

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Compaſſion; and what ineſtimable, what infinite Demonſtrations of this kind God hath been pleaſed to give us, hath been already declared at large. The whole Frame of the World, and all his Proceedings with Man, are ſo many undeniable Evidences of it. And therefore where the Rivers are ſo deep and wide, it muſt needs follow, that the Spring from whence they take their riſe is Inexhauſtible, Unmeaſurable, and far ſurpaſſing the Compaſs of any Human, or Finite Underſtanding.

If it be Enquired, what ſhould move Almighty God to be ſo very Kindly Affected towards Man, I own myſelf Incapable of giving any Sufficient Account of it on our Part, and rather Chuſe, with Holy Men in Scripture, to ſtand Amazed at the Marvellous Condeſcenſion. The more we reflect upon his Majeſty, and our own Vileneſs, the greater ſtill muſt needs be our Wonder and Aſtoniſhment. But yet ſome Light into this Matter is given us by Wiſe and Good Men. *Thou Loveſt all the Things that are*, ſays *Solomon*, *and Abhorreſt nothing which thou haſt Made; for never wouldſt thou have made any Thing, if thou hadſt Hated it. Therefore thou Spareſt all, becauſe they are Thine, O Lord, Thou Lover of Souls.* And, that This is a very juſt Inference, God himſelf hath informed us, by laying it as the Ground of his Solemn Proteſtations, that he hath no Pleaſure in the Death of a Sinner; that *all Souls are his*; Intimating hereby, that it is contrary to all Reaſon and Equity, to ſuppoſe him delighted with the Deſtruction and Miſery of that to which himſelf gave Being. Thus we ſee it is in Nature, that every Man hath a more than ordinary Tenderneſs for thoſe Things which derive themſelves from him. The very Houſes of our own Building, the very Trees of our own Planting, give us a more Senſible Delight, and we are more Concerned for their Preſervation, than we feel for others, ready

Wiſd. xi. 24, 26.

Ezek. xviii. 4.

ready provided to our Hands. We are apt to loo upon theſe, as in ſome ſenſe a part of ourſelves, a the ſame propenſity which inclines us to love o ſelves, does in proportion extend our Care and A fection to whatever is of our own making.

Hence the Pſalmiſt recommending his People God's kind Protection thought it a very forcible A gument, to move his commiſeration of their Suffe

Pſal. lxxx. 8, 14, 15.

ings, when he prayed thus: *Thou haſt brought Vine out of* Egypt, *thou haſt caſt out the Heathen, a planted it. Return we beſeech thee, O God of Hoſ look down from Heaven, behold and viſit this Vine, a the Vineyard which thy own Right Hand hath plante and the Branch that thou madeſt ſtrong for thy ſe*

Iſa. lxiv. 8, 9.

And *Iſaiah*; *But now, O Lord, we are the* Clay a *thou our Potter, and we are all the Work of thy Han Be not wroth very ſore, O Lord, neither remember I quity for ever; behold, ſee, we beſeech thee, we are thy People.* And *Job* in the bitterneſs of his Affl ction: *Remember, I beſeech thee, that thou haſt ma*

Job. x. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

me as the Clay, and wilt thou bring me into Duſt agai Haſt thou not poured me out as Milk, and curdled like Cheeſe? Thou haſt cloathed me with Skin a Fleſh, and haſt fenced me with Bones and Sinew Thou haſt granted me Life and Favour, and thy Vi tation hath preſerved my Spirit. And theſe Things h thou hid in thy Heart: I know that this is with th By which Words this Holy Man plainly ſignifie that though God ſuffered him to be afflicted to ſu a Degree, as might almoſt tempt him to ſuſpe that he had forgotten him; yet he was well aſſure that his Goodneſs could not poſſibly forſake or d ſpiſe one who was his own Creature and Wor manſhip. Such a piece of Workmanſhip eſpeciall as was framed upon the Model, and after t Reſemblance, of the excellent and Almighty A tificer himſelf. And this very Conſideration ſu ported *David*, under the Senſe not of his Adve ſities and Sufferings only, but of his Sins and Infi

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nities too; that God, who made him, and under-
tood him throughly, and ſaw the Temper of thoſe
rittle Materials, of which he was compounded;
hat He, who underſtood this, would not fail to
ook graciouſly upon the Frailties and Neceſſities
f human Nature, and to paſs by any the moſt
rievous Offences, which theſe had betrayed him
nto. For here he lays the ſtreſs of his Hope and
omfortable aſſurance of Pardon. *Look how far di-*
ant the Eaſt is from the Weſt, ſo far hath he removed
ur Tranſgreſſions from us. As high alſo as the Hea-
en is above the Earth, ſo great is his Mercy towards
hem that fear him. Like as a Father pitieth his own
Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.
For he knoweth our Frame, he remembreth that we are
ut Duſt. Pſal. ciii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

From this reaſoning of *David* we may infer ano-
her Ground for hope of Pardon; nay even for Aſ-
urance of being kindly received, when we turn to
God; which is, that this Creator of all things in
ommon, is to Mankind in particular, a Father, a
itle of Love and Tenderneſs, the greateſt of any
the World; inſomuch, that the Philoſopher ob-
rved very truly, that no Man could conceive the
ffection of a Parent, who was not one himſelf.
Hence our bleſſed Saviour to keep us mindful of
is tender Regard, and provoke us to Returns of
Duty and filial Truſt, does as it were to kindle
ne Fire at another, very frequently make uſe of
is Title in his Divine Diſcourſes. Thus we are
ommanded to forgive and treat them well who
e us ill, that we may be the *Children* of our *Father*, Mat. v.
ho makes his Sun to ſhine, and his Rain to fall 45, 48.
n the Juſt and on the Unjuſt. We muſt *be Per-*
ct and Merciful, becauſe our Father in Heaven is ſo.
We are diſſuaded from anxious Care, and immode-
te Concern for the things of this World, becauſe
ur heavenly Father knows we have need of all theſe Chap. vi.
hings. The force of which evidently lies here, that 32.

ſince

ſince God not only knows our Wants; but is our Father too; as the former Conſideration infers his Ability, ſo the latter will not fail to engage his Inclination. A Father's Heart cannot be without provident Care for his Children, nor ſee them want thoſe Neceſſaries which it is in his Power to ſupply them with. And this our Lord confirms to us yet more, by inſtancing in the abundant Proviſion made for the Birds of the Air, the Flowers of the Field, and other Creatures, far leſs excellent, and of leſs eſteem in God's Sight: So that, if he be not wanting in his Care for Them, much leſs will he be ſo to Us, who are much dearer to him, than any other of his Creatures in this lower World.

Theſe Arguments have all the Relation of a Father for their proper Foundation, and they receive yet more Strength, from his being our *Heavenly* Father. One who in this Kindneſs and paternal Affection exceeds all earthly Parents as much as Infinite and Perfect is above Frail and Finite; as much as the Power and Clemency, and Goodneſs of Almighty God ſurpaſſes the Infirmity of his worſt and feebleſt Creatures. A Father who did not only impart Life and Being to his Children, but hath pour-
Gal. iv. 6. ed into their Hearts that yet more precious Gift the Spirit of his own Divine eternal Son: By this ſtirring them up to Hope and Confidence in his paternal Goodneſs and Protection. And in virtue of this Confidence, not only Saints, but Sinners, have fled to, and been kindly received by him. So the Prophet *Iſaiah*, in the Name of his diſobedient People, made no difficulty to addreſs himſelf:
Iſa. lxiii. 16. *Doubtleſs thou art our Father, though* Abraham *be ignorant of us, and* Iſrael *acknowledge us not; Thou, O Lord, art our Father.* And our bleſſed Saviour after his Reſurrection, ſent the moſt comfortable Meſſage to his Diſciples, *Go and tell my Brethren, aſcend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and*

your

our God. Thus by these two Relations, the one importing infinite Power, the other infinite Love, taking away all distrust of succeeding, as oft as we shall have recourse to this God always able, to this Father always ready and most willing, to help us.

Thus God himself, after many Threatnings, denounced by the Prophet *Jeremy* against *Israel* for their Sins; lest these should drive them to despair, changes his Style, and assures them of his Favour, provided they sincerely turn to him; telling them that he had *loved them with an everlasting Love*, and *drawn them with Kindness*; that even his Threatnings and Punishments were Instruments of Mercy, and that they should be refreshed after their Afflictions, and gathered from their Dispersion, because I (says he) *am a Father to* Israel, *and* Ephraim *my first-born.* And, a little after, to the rebellious Kingdom of *Samaria*, which was to receive Mercy, he delivers himself in these affectionate Terms: *Is* Ephraim *my dear Son? is he a pleasant Child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have Mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* These are the Bowels of Compassion so emphatically mentioned by *Zacharias*, to incline God in favour of Mankind, who had offended him: that true and tender Commiseration of the Father in the Parable, whom though his prodigal Son had not only displeased, but utterly abandoned, though he had spent all his Substance in riotous and most scandalous Courses, and reduced himself to the last Degree of Misery by his wicked Life, yet, upon his return Home, he was so far from disdaining to receive him, that he run to meet him with open Arms, welcom'd and kiss'd him, adorn'd him with the best Robe, made a solemn Feast, invited his Friends to rejoice with him upon this Occasion, and express'd a much more sensible Satisfaction

Jer. xxxi. 3, 9.

ver. 20.

Luke i. 78.

Luke xv.

tisfaction in his return, than if he had never gone away, or deſerv'd ill from him at all.

By all which Figurative Repreſentations the Bleſſed *Jeſus* intended to give us a true Notion of our Heavenly Father's incomprehenſible Love and Pity to relenting Sinners, when they come back to their Duty. With regard to which he is call-
2 Cor. i. 3. ed by the Apoſtle *The Father of Mercies*, becauſe this boundleſs Ocean of Mercies flows in a peculiar manner from the tender Diſpoſition of a Father. Which cannot ſo properly be ſaid of his Judgments; and therefore he is never called the *Father*, but the *God* of Juſtice and Vengeance. In ſhort, this bleſſed Name of Father denotes all the Sweetneſs and Love, all the Friendſhip and Comfort, all the Care and Protection, all the Readineſs to forgive, all the earneſt Deſire to ſave his Children from Ruin, that we can poſſibly ſuppoſe belonging to that Relation. Nay, to give us the utmoſt Aſſurance of Kindneſs, God does not ſuffer us to entertain Thoughts of him, I mean, as that any the moſt ſoft and tender Reſentments of the moſt affectionate Parent upon
Iſa. xlix. 15. Earth can equal or come near to his. *Can a Woman forget her ſucking Child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the Fruit of her Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, ſaith the Lord.* So ſhort of God's Kindneſs is even a Mother's Love; ſo great aſſurance of Grace and Forgiveneſs may we Children promiſe ourſelves from God being our Father.

But ſtill we have a greater Demonſtration of this Love behind, than either of the former. An Evidence beyond all Parallel, and that which alone would ſuffice to convince us, that God is moſt graciouſly and kindly diſpoſed towards us. This we find it repreſented in St. *John*, *So God loved the*
Joh. iii. 16. *World, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him ſhould not periſh, but ſhould*
have

ove everlaſting *Life*. This Redemption then, when e were in a loſt Condition, is a moſt irrefraga- e Proof of God's great Kindneſs. For what are e, that ſo precious a Ranſom ſhould be paid down r us as the Life and Blood of his Eternal and ly begotten Son? And how can we ſuppoſe, at he ſhould have thought our Safety worth pur- aſing at ſo dear a Rate, had he not loved us a- ve all Meaſure? Nay, how exceeding abundant s this Goodneſs, which proceeded from his n mere Motion without any Motive on our rt? for thus we are taught by the ſame Apoſtle, rein *is Love, not that we loved God, but that he* 1 Joh. iv. 10. *ed us, and ſent his Son to be the Propitiation for Sins.* I ſaid it had no Motive on our Part; but t is not all. For we had laid the greateſt Bar t could be to obſtruct it, and provoke God be angry irreconcileably, and to caſt us off for r. And therefore here is the very Perfection of odneſs, that notwithſtanding all our Provoca- ns ſo much ſhould be done to reſcue us from in. *In this God commendeth his Love towards us,* Rom. v. 8 *while we were yet Sinners, Chriſt died for us.* d, in another Place, the ſame Apoſtle makes Greatneſs of this Mercy the Meaſure of God's ndant Love: *God* (ſays he) *who is rich in Mercy,* Eph. ii. *the great Love wherewith he loved us, even when* 4, 5, 6, 7. *were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, hath quickned us ther with Chriſt, and hath raiſed us up together, made us ſit together in heavenly Places in Chriſt us; that in the Ages to come he might ſhew the ex- ing Riches of his Grace in his Kindneſs towards us ugh Jeſus Chriſt.*

This is the conſtant Strain of the New Teſta- nt. And, what Inferences can we better draw n it, than thoſe which we find ready drawn ur Hand by St. *Paul? He that ſpared not* Rom viii. *own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how* 32. *l he not with him alſo freely give us all Things?*

Rom. v. 9, 10. And again, *If when we were Enemies we were reconc led to God by the Death of his Son, much more bei juſtified we ſhall be ſaved from Wrath, and thus r conciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his Life.* He, wh thought us worth ranſoming at ſo dear a Pric now that he hath made us his own by Redemptio what ſhall he not do for us? How can we ſuppo he will not receive us, when our Salvation ſha coſt him no more than a kind look? Which in Com pariſon of what he hath done in our Behalf alread is not ſo much as one Drop of Water, compar to the huge and bottomleſs Ocean? And this m ſuffice for the *Firſt* Branch of my Argument, co ſiſting in the comfortable Aſſurance which Sinne may have of his Kindneſs and readineſs to forgiv as he is their *Creator*, their *Father*, and their R *deemer*.

SECT. III.

How tenderly God expreſſes himſelf to Sinners i Scripture.

I Proceed in the next Place, to conſider th kind Declarations, which Almighty God h made of his readineſs to receive returning P tents, and the Methods of his proceeding in der to their Converſion and Salvation. The W Man introduces him, conniving at the Sins Wiſd. xii. Men for a Time, and holding his Hand from niſhment, to give them ſpace and leiſure for ſec and better Thoughts: And, when by their glect theſe gentler Methods have no influence u them for their Reformation, but ſuch abuſe of M cy does, as it were, extort ſeverity from his voked Juſtice; he then proceeds gradually, and ſuch Steps as are moſt likely to have a good E upon them. *Thou chaſteneſt them* (ſays the Auth

uthor) *by little and little, and warneſt them by put-*
g them in Remembrance wherein they have offended;
at, leaving their Wickedneſs, they may believe in
ee, O Lord.

Now theſe Two Inſtances are plain Evidences of
eat Goodneſs in Almighty God. *Firſt*, To wink
Men's Weakneſs, and with unſpeakable Pa-
ence and Long-ſuffering to expect their Amend-
ent; according to that of the Prophet *Iſaiah*,
herefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious Iſai. xxx.
to you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may 18.
ve Mercy upon you. And then in purſuance of
e ſame kind Intentions, when it cannot conſiſt
ith the Methods of his *Government* to ſuffer their
ranſgreſſions to paſs any longer uncorrected, ſo
moderate and temper his Juſtice with Mildneſs
d Mercy, as always in this Life to reſerve a
ace for Pardon and Amendment, and not to cut
ff thoſe Offenders utterly, whom he finds it ne-
ſſary to chaſtiſe.

To theſe Two Inſtances we may add another,
t more wonderful than the former: Which is,
at he, who is the injured and offended Party,
es yet make the firſt Advances towards Recon-
iation: And, though in Equity he might take
evenge at his Pleaſure, and deny us Pardon, even
hen we ſeek it moſt importunately; yet does he
moſt amazing Condeſcenſion, offer us Peace of
s own accord; nay, he humbles himſelf ſo low, as
Intreat and Court us, that we will accept his
riendſhip and our Safety. Thus the Majeſty of
e great God ſtoops to the Vileneſs of his moſt
nworthy Creatures; and the Prince and Lord of
e whole World takes upon him the part of the
eaneſt Slave. He makes his Addreſs to us, as if
e could deſerve his Love, or were in ſome Degree
eceſſary and advantageous to him, to him I ſay,
hoſe abſolute and perfect Happineſs cannot poſſi-

bly receive any Addition from the moſt excellent Works of his own Hand.

The many Examples of God's dealing with his People the *Jews*, are a manifeſt Proof of this. And thoſe many kind Expoſtulations, where he ſollicits *Jeruſalem*'s Converſion with a moſt affectionate Earneſtneſs. The Prophet *Iſaiah* in particular, will furniſh us with Inſtances of Intreaties ſo preſſing, Complaints ſo moving, Conferences ſo friendly, Proffers of Pardon ſo free, Suſpenſion of Puniſhment ſo relenting, Teſtimonies of Love ſo unfeigned, Leagues of Amity ſo firm; that whoſoever ſhall read and conſider them muſt needs confeſs with *David*, that the *Lord is gracious*, and *his mercy is over all his works*. And the like we find in that Prophecy of *Jeremiah*; which foretels indeed the Rejection and Exile of that People, but yet in ſuch Terms, that, even after this dreadful Reſolution was taken, and the Time of Execution drew near, his Bowels yearned over thoſe obdurate Sinners, and the Prophet is ſent to warn them again and again of their approaching Ruin.

Iſa. xlii, xliii, &c.

Jer. vii. 2, 3. *Yet now hear the Word of the Lord, all ye of* Judah *that enter in at theſe Gates; thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the God of* Iſrael, *amend your Ways and your Doings, and I will cauſe you to dwell in this Place.* But when theſe Promiſes had no Effect, then God proceeds by Threatnings to fright them into their Duty. *Do they provoke me to anger, ſaith the Lord, do they not provoke themſelves to the Confuſion of their own Faces? Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold my Anger and my Fury ſhall be poured out upon this place, upon Man, and upon Beaſt, and upon the Trees of the Field, and upon the Fruit of the Ground, and it ſhall burn and ſhall not be quenched. And the Carcaſes of this People ſhall be Meat for the Fowls of the Heaven, and for the Beaſts of the Earth.* The Enemy ſhall come and ſhall *bring out the Bones of the King of* Judah *and the Bones of the Prieſts, and the Bones of the Pro-*

19, 20.

33.

Chap. viii. 1.

phets

ets, and the Bones of the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem t of their Graves. And Death ſhall be choſen rather an Life, by the Reſidue of this evil Family in all the laces whither I have driven them. And yet ſtill, od puts not off all his tender Relentings; for us it follows, *Shall they fall, and not riſe? Shall turn away, and not return? Why then is this People Jeruſalem ſlidden back with a perpetual Backſliding?* By theſe and infinite other Means of Mercy God ng contended with that hardened People, and la- ured hard to gain them to himſelf. And when oſe had no Succeſs, he ſuffered Captivity and ſolation to fall upon them. Nor does he even n give them up utterly, but in that State of Mi- y and Bondage promiſes to forget all their for- r Obſtinacy, and ſtill to be gracious, and to re- re them again, provided they would, though e, bethink themſelves, and repent, and accept Mercy then tendered to them. Jer. viii. 3, 4, 5.

And is it poſſible for any Man, who reflects at upon this Manner of Proceeding, to deſpair of rdon upon Return and ſerious Amendment! Sup- ing his Offences to be never ſo grievous, yet they not exceed thoſe of the *Jews*, whom God in Indignation brands with the reproachful Titles of *ellious*, *Impudent*, and *Stiff-hearted*, a People loſt all Shame, and of an incorrigible Diſpoſition. d yet what Variety of excellent Arts, and holy portunities, were employed to procure this ple's Amendment? Nay, for our farther Com- and Encouragement, I muſt add one moſt arkable Paſſage more from this Example, which ed is ſo high an Exceſs of Goodneſs, that no an Imagination could ever have apprehended no Reaſon could have render'd it probable, or ible, had not God, who is Truth itſelf, declar'd ſo it is. Thoſe Promiſes I mean made to ers, that if they do duly and earneſtly repent, will not only blot all their paſt Iniquities out Ezek. ii. 3, 4.

of his Remembrance, but even rejoice in their Con
verſion, and receive and cheriſh them with greate
Tenderneſs, than if they had never forſaken an
departed from him at all. This is the true Impo
Iſai. xl. 1, 2. tance of that kind Meſſage by *Iſaiah*, *Comfort*
my People, ſpeak comfortably to Jeruſalem, and ſ
unto her, that her Warfare is accompliſhed, that h
Iniquity is pardoned, for ſhe hath received of the Lor
Hand double for all her Sins. And again, deſcribi
the Happineſs of their being reſtored to Favou
Iſai. xxx. 26. *The Light of the Moon ſhall be as the Light of the Su*
and the Light of the Sun ſhall be ſevenfold, as
Light of ſeven Days; in the Day that the Lord bin
eth up the Breach of his People, and healeth
Stroke of their Wound. What God thus promiſes
his People the *Jews*, we are well aſſured, ſhall
the happy Condition of every Penitent in particul
For to this purpoſe it is, that our Lord, in th
moſt comfortable Parables, deſcribes the Joy
Satisfaction God and Angels take in the Converſ
of a Sinner, by the Feaſting and Gladneſs of
Shepherd retrieving his ſtray Sheep, of the car
Woman ſeeking and finding her loſt Piece of M
ney, and of the compaſſionate Father gladly
ceiving his prodigal Son. And thus much
ſuffice for the *Second* Branch of this Argument,
kind Expreſſions, and wonderful Means made
of by God, to invite and encourage wicked M
to abandon their vicious Courſes, and return
Him and their *Duty*.

SE

SECT. IV.

ncerning the Assurance of Pardon, which God hath given to all them that truly repent and turn to him.

AFTER ſo large a Declaration, what exceeding Love God bears towards Mankind in neral, and the earneſt Sollicitations he makes uſe to win Sinners over to their own Happineſs, it ll be a farther Strengthening to this Argument, obſerve, what Aſſurance he hath given all thoſe, ho are deſirous to make ſome Returns of Love, d willing to comply with his importunate Calls, at they ſhall be pardoned and accepted by him. nd, although this might be ſufficiently gathered d conceived from the Paſſages and Arguments eady inſiſted upon; yet, to take off all diſquiet- g Doubts and Fears of this moſt important and mfortable Truth, I ſhall enlarge a little more, d endeavour to poſſeſs my Reader with the ful- ſt and cleareſt Evidence of the Thing. In order hereunto there can be but two Sorts of Proof ne- ſſary; which are, the Words and the Actions of is offended Majeſty: What he hath promiſed to ery one who ſincerely flees to him for Refuge; d what he hath actually performed to Perſons, ho have grievouſly offended him in any Kind hatſoever.

For the *Firſt* of theſe, his Promiſes: Nothing an be more apparent, than that the whole Bent nd Drift of Scripture is in effect the ſame with at Text of *Iſaiah*, *Let the Wicked forſake his Way*, Ch. lv. 7. *nd the unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him eturn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon im; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* t is not poſſible for any Engagements to be more xpreſs or ſolemn; for any Invitations to be more ehement and affectionate; for any Declarations

to

to be more abſolute and univerſal, than thoſe which his infinite Goodneſs hath condeſcended to make uſe of upon this Occaſion. No People, no Perſon, no Time or Seaſon is excepted, but *Whatſoever the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedneſs that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his Soul alive. Becauſe he conſidereth and turneth away from all his Tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die.* No kind of Sins, though never ſo heinous and horrible, are excluded: *All his Tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be mentioned unto him. Waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your Doings; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they ſhall be as Snow; though they be red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool.* And again, To ſhew that the foulеſt Unfaithfulneſs is no Bar to Mercy, God invites an adulterous People to Reformation in the Terms: *They ſay, If a Man put away his Wife, and ſhe go from him, and become another Man's, ſhall he return unto her again? Shall not that Land be greatly polluted? But thou haſt played the Harlot with many Lovers, yet return again unto me, ſaith the Lord.* Thus we ſee all Qualities and Conditions of Men, how manifold, how contemptuous ſoever their Tranſgreſſions have been, are contained within theſe Exhortations to Repentance, and Promiſes of Remiſſion.

Ezek. xviii. 27, 28.

ver. 22.

Iſa. i. 16, 17, 18.

Jer. iii. 1.

And what more can be expected, what greater Encouragement can poſſibly be given, upon theſe Occaſions? Was ever any injur'd Prince ſo large in Offers of Clemency to his rebellious Subjects? Was ever provoked Father ſo tender, ſo eaſy to be reconciled to his diſobedient Children? Who can ſuſpect himſelf to be excepted out of thoſe Aſſurances, in which all ſorts of People, all kinds of Sins, all Times and Seaſons of repenting and believing

elieving are manifeſtly comprehended? O wretch-
d Man! who by Diſtruſt excludeſt thyſelf, whom
God hath not excluded. What is there in theſe
eneral, theſe affectionate Promiſes, which any Man
ive can find a colourable Pretence to make the
aſt queſtion of? Shall we doubt the Intention of
e Promiſer? This is only Charity and Compaſſi-
n, and conſequently can deſign nothing but our
ood. Shall we ſuſpect the Sincerity and Fidelity
the Promiſer? He is Truth itſelf, and cannot
eceive us; Heaven and Earth are not ſo firm:
ven theſe in Time ſhall fail and paſs away, but it
not poſſible for his Word to fail. Shall we fear
s Ability to perform what he hath promiſed?
is Power is infinite, and knows no Reſtraint,
Bounds, but what his Will is pleaſed to ſet to
: And theſe very Promiſes are the authentick
eclarations of this Will, and how far he thinks
to extend that Power. What Scruple then can
main to diſquiet us? Or which of the Divine
erfections can occur to our Thoughts, which will
t miniſter Ground of ſweet and unſpeakable
onſolation? *Three Things there are*, ſays St. *Ber-*
rd, wherein my Hope conſiſts, and is even render'd
pregnable. The exceeding Love of him, who calls
e to him by Repentance. The infallible Truth and
ertainty of thoſe Promiſes, by which he hath obliged
mſelf to forgive, and to ſhew Mercy; and the un-
mited Power he hath to perform to the uttermoſt every
Word that hath proceeded out of his Mouth. This is
me *that threefold Cord, which the Scripture ſays*
nnot eaſily be broken: A Cord let down to Sinners
om above, to draw us up from this Priſon of a
World to Heaven, which is our true and proper
untry; and by it, if we will, we may aſcend to
e very Sight and Poſſeſſion of God's eternal Kingdom,
d heavenly Glory. *Serm. de frag. Miſericord.*

Thus much may ſuffice for the Nature and Pur-
rt of the Promiſes themſelves, and will be ſtill

more

more confirmed by our Conſideration of the *Second* Branch of this Argument, the Performance and actual Execution of them. Whereof God hath given us ſo many repeated, ſo many eminent Inſtances from time to time, that, ever ſince the World began, no One Man was diſappointed of his Hope, who returned from Sin to God, provided this Converſion were hearty, and attended with thoſe Qualifications, which the Scripture hath preſcribed as neceſſary to its Acceptance. And the Force of our Reaſoning upon this Point lies here; That it is by no means probable, he will be worſe than his Word hereafter, who hath all along kept it ſo punctually hitherto; eſpecially under the Chriſtian Covenant, which inſtructs us in one mighty Advantage, peculiar to Ours above former Times; The knowing, that He, the very Perſon who is our Judge, is alſo our Advocate and
1 Joh. ii. 2. Interceſſor, and the Propitiation for thoſe very Sins, of which he ſhall one Day come to take an Account.

Caſt back thy Eyes then, ſinful Man, whom thy own Fears have made faithleſs in this Point, and take a View of all Times paſt before thou came into Being. Begin at the Creation, and continue thy Enquiry down to this very Day; and tell me if thou canſt, in all this wide Compaſs of Perſons, Places, and Ages, of any one, though never ſo black and vile a Sinner, who upon his unfeigned Return to God, was not readily and graciouſly received by him. The Diſobedience of our firſt Parents was preſently remitted, upon their Signification of Shame and Sorrow for it. Nay, it was not remitted only, but a Promiſe was made of our bleſſed Saviour, the Son of God, to be ſent in human Fleſh, that by this Means they, and their numerous Poſterity, might be reſtored to that Glory and Happineſs, which by that Fall they had loſt. There are indeed between this and

renew

renewed Expreſſions of this Promiſe to *Abraham* and the Children of *Iſrael*, ſome very terrible Works of the Divine Juſtice and Vengeance recorded by *Moſes*. But they were ſuch, as only the impenitent Offenders periſhed under; and theſe are few in compariſon of the many more Examples of his Goodneſs and great Mercy.

Two or Three Perſons only, throughout the whole Bible are mentioned to have been finally rejected of God, notwithſtanding ſome Sorrow, which they ſeem to have had for their Offences. The *Firſt* of theſe is the Murderer *Cain*; but it is obſervable, that he was ſo far from acknowledging his Wickedneſs, as abſolutely and impudently to deny the Fact; and afterwards, upon Conviction, the Sorrow he had was turned into Confuſion and Deſpair. The *Second* was *Eſau*, whom St. *Paul* ſtyles a *prophane Perſon*, and he found no place *for Repentance*, that is, he could not prevail to have the Bleſſing upon *Jacob* reverſed, though he ſought it carefully with Tears. And St. *Chryſoſtom* aſſigns this Reaſon for his Rejection, that *He did not ſorrow as he ought to have done, nor were his Tears the Effect of true Grief and godly Remorſe for the Fact he had been guilty of, but rather of Indignation and Rage.* The *Third* is *Judas*, in the New Teſtament, who did indeed make ſome ſhew of Repentance, but it was a Sorrow, therefore ineffectual, becauſe attended with Deſpair; and urging him rather to put an end to his Agonies by Death, than by addreſſing to God for Mercy. Theſe Inſtances therefore do not come up to the preſent Caſe. Nor can they juſtify any Man's Doubt of being forgiven upon true Repentance; becauſe they only prove, that ſome Perſons have been rejected, whoſe Repentance, whatever it might appear, was not true; but manifeſtly defective in ſome Qualification neceſſary to recommend it to God's acceptance.

Hom. de pæn. ad pop. Antioch.

But

But now if we turn our Eyes another way, and obſerve the numberleſs Inſtances of thoſe ſincere Penitents, who have been actually Received and Pardoned, no Proſpect can be more ſweet, more comfortable, more encouraging. From the time that the People of *Iſrael* came to be formed into a diſtinct Nation, and governed by God's own appointment, how grievouſly, how daily did they offend his Divine Majeſty? And yet, how graciouſly did his unſpeakable Mercy pardon and paſs by the innumerable Faults committed againſt him? The whole Old Teſtament, in effect, is little elſe than one continued Account of his incredible Patience, and infinite Compaſſion towards them. And, ſhould I undertake to illuſtrate this Truth, by reckoning up all the particular Perſons admitted into Favour after many and grievous Provocations, it were hard to ſay, where it were proper to begin, or when it were poſſible to make an end. Let that moſt impious and profligate King *Manaſſes* ſerve as one Example for all, of whoſe moſt enormous Life and deteſtable Acts the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, and ſeveral Chapters in the Prophets ſpeak ſo largely: Yet even this Man, when Miſery and Captivity (a happy School oftentimes for Princes whom Greatneſs and Proſperity had tempted to forget God, and deſpiſe Inſtruction and Reproof) when this Man's Calamities, I ſay, had brought him to a Senſe of, and Sorrow for his former Wickedneſs, he became an eminent Proof of God's incomprehenſible and boundleſs Mercy; he was accepted and forgiven, brought back from his Priſon and Chains, and reſtored to his Throne, and, which is infinitely better, to God's Love and Favour again.

We have not, any where upon Record, a more remarkable, or a more celebrated Pattern of this kind, than the Caſe of the *Ninevites*, and therefore I cannot think it amiſs to be ſomewhat particular

ular in it. Againſt that People God had pro-
ounced a Sentence of Deſtruction, and ſet him-
lf a ſhort Day for the Execution of it, which
e Prophet *Jonas* was therefore commanded to
o and give them warning of. He knowing very
ell the Nature of God, and the true Importance
his Threatnings, how readily he is diſpoſed to
are and forgive, if Men, upon the notice of his
nger, be careful to appeaſe it by ſincere and ſpee-
Amendment, foreſaw that if he ſhould carry
is Meſſage, and they ſhould make the right uſe
it, their Calamity would be prevented, and ſo
ſhould incur the Cenſure of a falſe Prophet.
ence he choſe rather to fly away by Sea to *Tar-*
ſh, and ſo, as he thought, eſcape the ungrate-
Employment. But Almighty God ſo ordered
e Matter, that, upon a Storm, the Ship's Crew
t *Jonas* into the Sea; there a Whale was order-
to receive him, and after his miraculous De-
erance from this devouring Fiſh, he was a ſe-
nd Time commanded to repair to *Nineveh*, and
ecute his Commiſſion. Accordingly he preached
t within forty Days that noble and populous
y ſhould be utterly deſtroyed. And the conſe-
ence of this Warning was exactly what *Jonas* had
ore ſuſpected. The *Ninevites* believed his Meſ-
ge, and immediately betook themſelves to Repen-
ce: God was ſatisfied with their Humiliation,
revoked the ſevere Decree gone out againſt them.
nas at this was greatly ſcandalized, and expoſtu-
ed the Caſe with God very warmly: But God
ewed him the unreaſonableneſs of his Diſcontent,
ſo ſilenced his Complaints, that he was not able
make any Reply in his own Vindication: Which
was done in ſo wiſe, ſo ſenſible, ſo moving a
nner, that few Paſſages in Scripture are either
re ſurpriſing, or better deſerve our ſerious Con-
eration.

The angry Prophet could not bear to ſtay an longer in that City, the ſaving of which he vainl lookt upon as a Reflection upon his Honour an Truth; and therefore he had provided himſelf little Booth without the Walls, whither he retire and was ſheltered there from the Heat of the Sun
Jon. iv. by a *Gourd*, that caſt a ſhadow over him. Th *Gourd* God ordered a Worm to ſmite, ſo that withered, and left him expoſed to the Weather and, when this Loſs had provoked him to gre Impatience, his Murmurings are anſwered thus *Thou haſt had Pity on the* Gourd, *for the which th hadſt not laboured, neither madeſt it grow, whi came up in a Night, and periſhed in a Night: An ſhould not I ſpare* Nineveh, *that great City, where are more than ſixſcore Thouſand Perſons, that ca not diſcern between their Right Hand and their Left* This then was the Plea, in defence of God's ſo ve great Inclination to Mercy, that the *Ninevi* were his own Workmanſhip and the Labour of h Hands. A Plea that holds equally good, with r gard to all Mankind, and of which the Force ha been explained in the former part of this Chapt But this, and what hath been alledged beſides, r lates to Things done under the Old Teſtament o ly, before the appearance of Chriſt in Fleſh; a falls much ſhort of that Seaſon of Grace, und which we live at preſent.

For now God himſelf is come down to us Perſon, to ſhew the Riches of his Mercy, and d cover all the fulneſs of it to wretched undo Mortals. No Examples of former Ages are on to be named, in Compariſon of that Clemen extended by this laſt and moſt perfect Diſpen tion to Mankind. Our Maker and Maſter, ha ſuffered his Juſtice to be vanquiſhed, as it we and triumphed over by Mercy; and, in marv lous Compaſſion, hath dwelt in this Vale of Mi ry, converſed with his Creatures on purpoſe o

ffer Pardon and Happineſs, to as many as are con-
nt to embrace it. He does not only open the Luke xv.
old to all thoſe Sheep which had gone aſtray and
turn of their own accord; but the Shepherd
mſelf travels into the Wilderneſs to follow and
ok them out; and, when they are found, he John x.
ings them back upon his own Shoulders re-
icing; nay he hath laid down his own Life, and
ed his deareſt Blood in their Defence, and to pre-
rve them from the Wolf. O ſweet Jeſus! What
n be greater Love than this? What more con-
ncing Teſtimonies of Affection can the Heart of
an imagine or deſire? Can we ſuppoſe, that he
hoſe Bowels yearned over us ſo tenderly, will
t open all the Treaſures of his Goodneſs for us,
en we return to him? Can he think any thing
o precious, too much to do for us, who was
ntent to redeem us at the Expence of ſo much
ffering! Can we wonder at St. *Paul*'s Chara-
r of the Goſpel, that in it *Grace doth much more*
eedingly abound, when God did thus empty him-
f for our ſakes, and ſhed forth all the Riches of
eaven, for a Demonſtration of his ineſtimable
ve to them that ſhould ever after Repent and
ieve?

From this kind Diſpoſition it was, that our
rd, while upon Earth, delighted to converſe
h Sinners, to Chear and Comfort their de-
nding Spirits, and give them Courage and Con-
ence in Him. And this he did ſo publickly, as
reby to incur the Cenſure of the Scribes and
ariſees, and the Contempt of many ruling Per-
s among the Jews. Hence flowed thoſe gra-
us Words, and affectionate Invitations, *Come un-* Matth. xi.
e, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will 28.
e you reſt. If any Man thirſt, let him come unto John vii.
and drink; and him that cometh unto me, I will 37.
o wiſe caſt out. The Son of man is come to ſeek John vi.
to ſave that which was loſt. There is more Joy in 37.
Matth.
xviii. 11.
Luke xv.

Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, than over nin
ty and nine juſt Perſons who need no Repentance. Hen
this Holy One of God was reputed and reproac
ed, as a Friend and familiar Acquaintance of Ha
lots, and Publicans and Sinners. And ſo far i
deed he was their Friend, as a Phyſician is to t
Sick; he received and embraced, and healed a
forgave, all that repaired to him; Scribes a
Phariſees, Soldiers and Publicans, Harlots a
Thieves, the moſt infamous Offenders: Aſſuri
us that thus he would continue to do, after his
ſcenſion, and when ſeated at the right Hand
God. For there alſo he is our Judge, but our A
vocate too: our King, but our Mediator; o
God and our Redeemer; our Father and our Br
ther; our Prieſt and our Sacrifice; and in this de
ble Capacity it is, that our Safety conſiſts; Si
he, who muſt determine our Cauſe, loves us m
dearly, and pleads it for us withal moſt earne
and affectionately.

What then may we not, what indeed ought
not to hope, at the Hand of ſuch a Lord, w
hath left us ſuch ample Declarations, and ſuch
deniable Demonſtrations of his Love, ſo m
unparallel'd Inſtances of Kindneſs and Con
ſcenſion, and ſuch noble Monuments of inexh
ſtible Mercy? Why ſhould not his dealings w
other People inſpire us with a becoming Co
dence; and put every Sinner upon taking He
from theſe, as a Standard and Pattern of what
intends to do for every one, who at any t
comes in to him? Why ſhould not the Sweet
and the Remembrance of that Love, which h
been ever of old, draw us after him? Accord
to that Meditation of St. *Bernard* upon thoſe
dours mentioned in the Book of *Canticles*. "Swe
"eſt *Jeſus*, ſays he, the freſh and delicious Sc
"of thy wonderful Clemency invites us to
"after thee, when we are told, that thou deſpi
"

not humble Suitors, and doſt not abhor Mourning Sinners. We know, O Lord, full well, that thou didſt not reject the Thief that confeſſed thee; nor the ſinful Woman that waſhed thy Feet with her Tears; nor the *Canaanitiſh* Stranger that humbly expoſtulated her Caſe with thee; nor the Woman taken in Adultery when brought before thee; nor the Publican that followed thee; nor that Diſciple that denied thee; nor that other, who perſecuted thee; nor thy Murderers and Tormentors, who ſcourged and crucified thee. All theſe, O Lord, are ſo many rich Perfumes of thy moſt ſweet Mercy, and by the Fragrancy of theſe thy Ointments, we follow and gladly run after thee.

SECT. V.

The Application of the former Sections.

ALL that remains upon this Argument, is to apply the glorious Things ſaid of God's ...cy to each Man's Conſcience and particular ...poſe. And theſe Things are indeed ſo very ...ious, that it is not eaſy to conceive how any ... who reads and believes them, and is truly ... for, and ſincerely diſpoſed to forſake his ..., can entertain any Doubt or Diſtruſt, whe... he ſhall be pardoned for them or not. *It is ... that juſtifies*; *Who is he that condemneth?* ſays ...*Paul.* If he be inclined to deliver us, who ... be able to pluck us out of his Hands? If ...declares, that he may be appeaſed, and up... what Terms we may depend upon Forgive... why ſhould we preſume to ſuſpect him worſe ... his Word? Why ſhould we not rather ſup... ourſelves with that juſt Confidence adviſed ...St. *Paul*, who calls upon us, and upon every

Heb. x. 22, 23, &c. Sinner, in that Exhortation to the *Hebrews*; *Let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith, having our Hearts ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience, and our Bodies waſhed with pure Water: Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promiſed; and let us conſider one another, to provoke unto Love, and to Good Works.* The Apoſtle here plainly ſignifies, that a Sinner whatſoever, who ſhall reſolve to purge himſelf from all his paſt Guilt, and ſhall employ the remainder of his Life in Charity and good Works may boldly, and with great aſſurance approach Almighty God; and ſhall not fail of Remiſſion and a very kind Entertainment.

And if this be the true State of the Caſe, what Reaſon can any Man have to deſpair? Why ſhould any Sinner caſt away that Soul, which God has ſhewed himſelf ſo very deſirous to ſave? What lamentable Thing is it, to ſee ſo many Chriſtians languiſhing under the Burden of their Sins, and abandoning themſelves to all manner of careleſs and diſſolute Living, (which by the way, is the true Notion of Deſpair) out of this unreaſonable and ſenſeleſs Imagination, that they are gone ſo far already, and ſunk ſo deep in Senſuality and the habits of Vice, that it is impoſſible for them to amend, or in vain for them to think of ſucceeding by a Change of Life. I cannot better addreſs myſelf to this ſort of Men, than St. *Chryſoſtom* hath done, and therefore ſhall intreat my Reader, that he will very diligently attend to his Reaſoning upon the Matter.

Hom. 2. in Pſal. li. "Art thou, ſays he, bred up in a falſe Religion? Think upon the Wiſemen of the East. "Art thou an unjuſt Perſon? Think upon Zacheus the "Publican. Haſt thou lived in Uncleanneſs? Think upon the Harlot. Art thou a Murderer? "Conſider the Thief upon the Croſs. Art thou "a profane Perſon? Think upon St. *Paul*;

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a Blaſphemer, but afterwards an Apoſtle; Once a Perſecutor, but afterwards a Preacher of the Goſpel; Once a *Tare*, but afterwards converted into Good *Wheat*; Once a Wolf, but afterwards a Shepherd; Once Lead, but then changed into Gold; Once a Pirate and Robber, but afterwards a careful Pilot; Once a Deſtroyer, but afterwards a Planter of God's Vineyard; Once a Puller-down, but afterwards an eminent Maſter-builder of the Church. In him you ſee the Exceſs of Malice, in him too the utmoſt Vigor of a fervent Zeal; in him both the Folly of the Servant, and the Clemency of the Maſter. Say not therefore in Bar to thy Repentance, I am a Blaſphemer, or a Perſecutor, or a Man of impure Life; you have Inſtances of all the Kinds before you, and a ſafe Port to eſcape Shipwreck by, notwithſtanding. The Old Teſtament preſents you with *David*, the New with St. *Paul*. Do not therefore frame to thy ſelf vain Excuſes, or pretend Difficulties where there are none. If thou haſt ſinned, repent. If thou haſt ſinned a Thouſand Times, repeat thy Repentance as often. This is the Balm I would pour into thy Wounds, and this will aſſuage all the Anguiſh of them. I know the Shame and Deſpondency of a polluted and ſelf-condemning Conſcience. The Devil ſtands at thy Elbow whetting his Sword to deſtroy thee, and ſuggeſting theſe fatal and terrifying Accuſations. Thou haſt ſpent thy Youth in Riot and Senſuality, thou haſt ſquandred away thy Time; thou haſt been a Fornicator, an Unjuſt, a Covetous, a Perjured, a Prophane, and Blaſphemous Wretch, and what hope canſt thou have of being ſaved after all this? No, no, thou art loſt for ever. And therefore, ſince there is no Redemption, make the beſt of that little Life thou haſt left, and live in Jollity. Indulge

" thy Luſts, and never diſquiet thyſelf with fruit
" leſs Thoughts of Amending when it is to
" late.

" This is the Devil's Advice to profligate Men
" but I adviſe the direct contrary. I ſay, tho
" art not ſo far gone, but that thou may'ſt yet r
" cover thyſelf. If thou haſt been a Fornicato
" thou may'ſt ſtill be clean. If thou haſt com
" mitted Adultery, thou may'ſt yet be forgive
" If thou haſt fallen, thou may'ſt riſe again. T
" Repentance in Compariſon is but ſmall, but t
" Goodneſs of thy Lord is exceeding great.
" thou haſt been a Murderer, be ſorry and r
" pent. If thou haſt been covetous and Unju
" make Reſtitution, and grow wiſer and bett
" for the time to come. If thou haſt lived
" Adultery, do ſo no more; if thou are gri
" vouſly wounded, ſeek diligently for a Cu
" While there is Life there is Hope; though th
" be got to thy very laſt Day, to thy Sick Bed
" though thou begin to draw thy Breath ſho
" yet even then repent. The Mercies of G
" are not limited to any time; and, though t
" Hours be few, theſe Mercies are many a
" great. But you will ſay, how can this be? N
" Wounds are mortal, and putrified, and c
" I be healed in an Inſtant? Yes you may; y
" may be ſorry and confeſs from the Heart, a
" if you do your part, God will do the reſt.
" take yourſelf to Prayers and Alms, and
" that your preſent Circumſtances are capable
" and do not aſk, how theſe are poſſible to
" ceed. It is God that works, and do you exp
" I ſhould give you an account of his doings?
" mighty Power is concerned in your Recove
" and do you deſpair of the Effect? Your Phy
" cian applies Remedies, and you muſt rely up
" his Skill, and ſubmit to his Methods, with
" enquiring how they operate. How abſurd is
" th

then to truſt the Skill of a Fellow-Servant, and a Creature like yourſelf, and at the ſame time to diſtruſt the ability and kindneſs of your Lord and Creator? Leave off your Doubts, and wonder and ſtand amazed, and magnify this Spiritual Phyſician. Shall God be diſpoſed to put away thy Sin, and ſhall the Guilt of any Sins be tóo great for his Mercy?

"I would not be miſunderſtood in this Argument. My meaning is not to encourage your Careleſſneſs, or to encourage the vain Confidence of thoſe who wilfully perſiſt in Sin to the very laſt, but it is, to give you juſt Notions and Hopes of God's marvellous Goodneſs, and to prevent thoſe Men falling into Deſpair, who do truly and earneſtly Repent; for none of theſe are loſt, if they do not give themſelves up for loſt, and ſo are diſcouraged from repenting.

In which long Diſcourſe this excellently good Man takes Care, ſo to ſuſtain the worſt of Sinners with a Confidence of God's Mercy at what time ever they duly ſeek it, as not to bear them out in Negligence, or any wicked Delays of this neceſſary Duty. To which purpoſe St. *Auguſtin* likewiſe very Prudently and Piouſly admoniſhes wicked Men; *Let no one*, ſays he, *after a Hundred, no nor after a Thouſand Sins utterly deſpair of God's Mercy; but yet let him not ſo hope for it neither, as not to apply for it immediately: For when I forbid Deſpair, I would be underſtood to quicken men up to reconcile themſelves to God by amendment of Life. Otherwiſe it is very poſſible, that when Cuſtom hath hardened a Man in Vice, and rendred it familiar and habitual to him, he may not find himſelf able to deliver himſelf from the Snares of the Devil, when he would be very glad to do it.* *De Temp. Ser.* lviii.

And again. " It is not every Man that com
" mits ſin that God hates and declares againſt a
" an Abomination to him, but ſuch Sinners only
" as tranſgreſs wilfully; and continue in the
" Wickedneſs. For no Man that will amend
" and leave off his wicked Courſes, can in rea
" ſon, nay he may not in Duty, diſtruſt of God
" Mercy. Since by his Prophet he himſelf has
" ſent us that comfortable Meſſage, *Caſt away your*
Ezek. xviii. 30. " *Tranſgreſſions, and ſo Iniquity ſhall not be your*
" *Ruin.* But then this Mercy of God is of Ad
" vantage to us then only, when it does not de
" fer our Converſion, nor prove an Encourage
" ment to bind Sin upon Sin. The Danger where
" of, with regard to our Soul's Health, I think
" myſelf capable of giving you ſome tolerable
" Apprehenſion of, by the Reſemblance betwee
" the Wounds and the Sickneſs of this part, and
" what Senſe and Experience teaches us in our
" Bodies. If a Man's Leg or Arm be broken, I
" need not to be told how much Pain and Trou
" ble it coſts him before it be ſet, and perfect
" cured again. But if any Limb happen to be bro
" ken or wounded Twice, Thrice, or oftner ſtill
" in the very ſame place, you can eaſily imagine
" how much more Difficulty there muſt needs
" to reduce this Part to its primitive Strength
" and Soundneſs. Juſt thus it is in the Breach
" made upon our Souls too. If a Man fall into
" Sin, and repeat it a ſecond time, and then apply
" himſelf to the proper Medicines quickly, by
" taking Sanctuary in unfeigned Repentance, ſuch
" Cure while the Wound is Green, will aſk no long
" time, and may poſſibly be ſo perfect too, that
" not ſo much as a Scar ſhall be left behind: But
" if he ſuffer the Sore to putrify and inflame,
" adding Sin upon Sin; if he be more ſollicitous
" to cover than to heal the Wound, it is much
" to be feared a Mortification will enſue: The

" Doc

Doom, I mean, pronounced by the Apoſtle, will be his Lot; who tells them that are ſo ſtupid as not to be ſenſible, that *the Goodneſs and Forbearance of God ſhould lead them to Repentance, that they do by this Hardneſs and impenitent Heart heap up to themſelves Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who will not fail to render to every one according to his Deeds.* Rom. ii. 4, &c.

And what more powerful Argument can be urged, at once to ſupport our Hopes of Mercy, and to take down our Preſumption? The Preacher tells us, that the *Words of the Wiſe are as Goads*, they enter deep, and ſpur us on to Virtue. And, can we hear ſuch Words as theſe, without any Impreſſion, any Awakening at all? I hope not: And, for that Reaſon will cloſe this Chapter with another Paſſage out of the ſame Author, than which it is not eaſy to conceive any thing more fitted to move us, or more pertinent to the Subject we are now upon.

"Almighty God (ſays he) never deſpiſes any "Man's Repentance, provided it be offered to him "from an Honeſt Heart. Nay, he accepts it gladly, he embraces the Penitent moſt gladly; he "endeavours to reſtore the Perſon to that State of "Purity, in which he was before he fell. And, "which is more, though a Man be not able to exerciſe ſuch a Repentance, as is Perfect in all its "Parts, he accepts of what he can do, though it "be done in never ſo ſhort a Space. He doth not "ſuffer any Degree of Converſion to periſh or "loſe its juſt Reward. This I take to be *Iſaiah*'s "meaning, when, in the Perſon of God, he ſays "to *Iſrael*, *For a ſmall Moment I have forſaken thee, but with great Mercies will I gather thee. In a little Wrath I hid my Face from thee, but with everlaſting Kindneſs will I have Mercy on thee.* Let us then, "having theſe Examples before our Eyes, neither Iſai. liv. 7, 8.

"perſevere

" preſerve in our Wickedneſs, nor deſpair of Re-
" conciliation, if we forſake it. Let us rather ſay
" with Hearts full of Hope, *We will ariſe and go to*
" *our Father*, and turn to the Lord our God; for
" moſt aſſuredly he will never turn away from any
" Man, that truly turns to Him. Himſelf hath
" ſaid, *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to*
Jam. iv. 8. " *you*; *cleanſe therefore your hands, ye Sinners, and pu-*
" *rify your Hearts, ye double-minded*; for nothing but
" Sin can keep up a Diſtance, and ſeparate between
" him and us. Let us then take away this Bar, and
" nothing ſhall hinder that Friendſhip and Union
" which he greatly deſires. For to this very End
" did he create us, that he might beſtow upon us
" eternal Bliſs in his heavenly Kingdom. Hell was
" not made for us; but his own Kingdom was
" made for Men, and Hell for the Devil. Obſerve
" the Difference of thoſe two Sentences, which our
" Lord declares ſhall be pronounced at the laſt Day:
" *Come, ye bleſſed Children of my Father, inherit the*
" *Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the*
" *World*: This to the Saints; but to the Damned:
" *Depart from me, ye Curſed, into everlaſting Fire, pre-*
" *pared for the Devil and his Angels.* If then Hell
" Fire was made for Devils, but the Kingdom of
" Heaven was prepared for Mankind, and that from
" the beginning of the World, it lies upon us only
" to take care, that we do not loſe our Inheritance
" by continuing in Sin. While we continue in this
" Life, we are ſtill in a Capacity of waſhing away
" our Sins by Repentance, how many or grievous
" ſoever thoſe Sins may formerly have been. But
" when once we are taken out of the World, tho'
" we be then never ſo ſorry, and repent never ſo
" heartily, (as no doubt we ſhall) yet all our Grief
" will then ſtand us in no ſtead at all. Our Teeth
" may gnaſh, our Mouths cry out, our Eyes guſh
" out with Tears, our Hearts moſt bitterly deplore
" our ſad condition; but there ſhall be none then

" to

" to hear our Prayers or Complaints, none to " help or pity us; not ſo much as a drop of Water " upon the tip of a Finger ſhall then be obtained " to cool our Tongue in the midſt of Flames un- " quenchable, and Torments unſpeakable. That " killing anſwer of *Abraham* to the Rich Glutton " is all we are to expect, *Between us and you there is* " *a great Gulph fixed, ſo that they who would paſs from* " *hence to you, cannot; neither can they paſs to us, who* " *would come from thence*". This Exhortation of St. *Auguſtin*'s is ſo full, ſo directly to our purpoſe, a- gainſt Deſpair of God's Mercies in the one Extreme, nd ſuch a Preſumption upon them, as may render Men negligent and ſecure on the other; that it at nce encourages our Amendment, and ſhews the anger of delaying it. And therefore I cannot hink any Thing more neceſſary to be added upon he Subject deſigned to be treated of in this *Firſt hapter.*

CHAP. II. SECT. I.

he Second Obſtruction to a Holy Reſolution: The pretended Difficulties of a Good Life. The fallacy of this pretence Diſcovered, And the many Advantages, which render Virtue and Piety Eaſy and Pleaſant, Explained.

THE Conſideration of God's infinite Goodneſs, and the undeniable Proofs of his Readineſs to forgive, have, I hope, ſet my Reader's eart at reſt in that Point; and ſecured him from l Temptations, that would provoke him to De- air; a Temptation which the ſubtle and mali- ous Enemy of Souls knows to be ſo utterly void

of

of all Ground, that this very Mercy of God, upon which we have been enlarging, is Matter of perpetual Envy and Grief to him. And ſuch a one too, as he is ſenſible will not anſwer his Deſigns, except with Perſons long abandoned to ſinful Habits, and who have little time left to make a thorough Reformation. This therefore is commonly the Method, by which he attacks the Profligate and Profane, the Old, the Hardened, or the Dying Sinner. But thoſe who have been ſo deeply entangled in his Snares, and ſeem to have a great part of Life ſtill before them, he hath another way of managing. Theſe he perſuades to conſult their preſent Eaſe, to be careful how they engage in the practice of Chriſtian Virtues, by repreſenting Religion under a falſe Light, as a Difficult, Unpleaſant, and very painful Undertaking; full of Melancholy, and void of all Comfort: That which deſtroys Good Society, robs them of all Mirth and Enjoyment of themſelves, and the World; expoſes them to perpetual Anxiety and Vexation of Mind, and enjoins Severities by no means ſupportable, to ſuch Bodies, ſuch Education, and ſuch Inclinations and Cuſtoms, as the generality of Mankind carry about with them, and have been all along bred up in.

How plauſible, and withal, how fatal an Artifice this is, we may eaſily perceive, if we reflect at all, Either, how it is calculated to flatter the Principle of Senſuality to which corrupt Nature ſtands ſo ſtrongly byaſſed; Or upon the vaſt Numbers of People ſeduced by it; Who adhere to theſe Inſinuations, as the beſt Counſel and moſt perfect Wiſdom; and look upon them, who chuſe or adviſe, a contrary courſe, as Men, either overborn by Prejudice, or defective in Diſcretion and good Senſe. So that this pretence of the Difficulties and Diſadvantages attending a ſtrict and holy Life is become a very ſtrong, and a very uſual Obſtruction

ſtruction; Such as diſcourages infinite Souls from a reſolute and vigorous purſuit of Holineſs and Salvation; and therefore it is abſolutely neceſſary to the Deſign I am driving on, to examine it throughly, and give it a full Anſwer.

Now here firſt of all, I ſhall take the Liberty to affirm, that, allowing the Objection, and even ſuppoſing the Practice of Virtue encumbred with all the Hardſhips which the Adverſary of Souls, and our own partial Luſts, endeavour to charge it with; yet even upon theſe Terms, it deſerves our Preference, becauſe the Rewards it propoſes are ſo incomprehenſibly glorious and deſireable, that no Pains ought to ſeem too much in order to the attaining them. Nay, I might urge the ſame Argument farther, with regard to the inſupportable and infinite Puniſhments, reſerved for the Diſobedient and Wicked too. For, if we think it Wiſdom to be ſo exceeding ſollicitous, for avoiding much leſs Calamities; if no Labour, no Trouble be declined, which may preſerve us from Impriſonment, or Sickneſs, from the loſs of Goods, or of this wretched and tranſitory Life; Can we then, in reaſon, think any thing too much to do or to endure, which may deliver us from thoſe Torments of Hell Fire, that are not only intolerable, but Eternal? The former of theſe Conſiderations is urged by St. *Paul*, who tells us, that *the Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed.* Rom. viii. 18. The latter intimated by St. *Peter*, who, after declaring the certainty of our Lord's coming to Judgment, infers, *what manner of Perſons ought we then to be in all manner of Holy Converſation and Godlineſs?* 2 Pet. iii. 11. As if he ſhould have ſaid, no Labour, no Hardſhip, ought to ſeem grievous to us, whereby the Terrors of that dreadful Day may be avoided. What do we think the Rich Man in the Parable would do! What would he not do to purchaſe a Releaſe from thoſe tormenting

menting Flames of which he there complains so bitterly? How would he Labour, and Pray, how bountiful would he ſhew himſelf in his Alms, rather than fall again into that Place of Miſery? After how very different a manner would he behave himſelf, from what he did while upon Earth, could he be allowed to lead his Life over again, and put the Iſſue of his final State upon a Second Tryal?

To theſe Pains, fit for us to ſubmit to the taking upon our own Account, a farther Motive might be fetched, from the infinite Pains Chriſt took for us; The infinite Benefits he hath beſtowed upon us; The infinite Offences we have committed againſt him; The infinite Examples of Saints, who have travelled this rugged way before us, who yet were in all points as ſenſible of, and naturally as averſe to, Trouble and Suffering, as ourſelves are. And ſure, upon all theſe accounts, it would very ill become us to boggle at, and be diſcouraged by, ſome Difficulties, were they in reality as many, and as great, as ſome Perſons form to themſelves, and as the Devil repreſents them to be, when he labours moſt to magnify them to us.

But in very deed the matter is quite otherwiſe; and all theſe frightful Ideas are an Artifice of the Enemy, contrived to Diſcourage, and Deceive, and Deſtroy us. Our Lord hath told us moſt truly, that *his Yoke is eaſy, and his Burden Light*; and St. *John* for our Comfort declares that *his Commandments are not grievous.* Whence then comes it to paſs, that Men conceive ſuch inſuperable Difficulties attending a Chriſtian's Obedience? One Reaſon no doubt, and next to the deluſion of the Tempter, the chief is, that Senſe they have of a depraved and diſeaſed Mind; but while they feel themſelves languiſhing under the Malady, they attend not the Medicine prepared to heal it. St. *Paul* indeed calls himſelf a wretched Man

Mat. xi. 30.
1 Joh. v. 3.

Man, *in regard of the Law in his Members, which he found perpetually Warring againſt the Law of his Mind:* (that Rebellion of Appetite left in our ſenſitive Soul by original Sin) but then he forgets not at the ſame time to magnify *the Grace of God through Jeſus Chriſt*, which *delivered him from the Body of that Death.* So theſe Men ſhould do well, in the midſt of all the deſponding Reflections upon their own Infirmities, to remember that Support given to St. *Paul* in his Diſtreſs; *My Grace is ſufficient for thee, for my Strength is made perfect in Weakneſs.* Their Caſe is much like that of *Eliſha*'s ſervant, who gave himſelf for loſt, when ſurrounded with a huge Army of *Syrians*, ready to aſſault him; but, by the Prayers of his Maſter, God opened his Eyes, and diſcovered an inviſible Guard, which he thought not of; Chariots of Fire, and Hoſts of Angels, much more numerous and powerful, than all the force that came againſt him. And then he was ſoon convinced, that they who took his part were much the ſtronger ſide, and that he was abſolutely in ſafety, even then when his danger appeared moſt formidable.

Rom. vii. 23.

2 Cor. xii. 9.

2 Kin. vi.

Thus is it with the weak and fearful Chriſtian, whoſe Heart miſgives him upon the approach of temptations and the Senſe of his own Inability to reſiſt them. The Conflict appears painful, the conqueſt impoſſible; but it is only becauſe his own negligence hath hindred him from taſting thoſe heavenly Refreſhments and powerful Succours, which Almighty God never fails to ſuſtain thoſe faithful Combatants with, who are willing and ready to enter the Liſts, and fight manfully under his Banner. St. *Paul* who had Proof of theſe Advantages, gives another account of the Matter; and, after reckoning up all the Hardſhips which would render this Service hotteſt, ſhouts forth with Triumph, *In all theſe Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.* And then he

Rom. viii. 37.

Rom. viii. 38, 39. he proceeds to that noble Proteſtation, that *neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor any other Powers, nor Things preſent, nor Things to come, nor any Creature* whatſoever, *ſhould be able to ſeparate him from the Love of God*, or make him abandon his Service. And this, upon the confidence of that Aſſiſtance of whoſe Spiritual Efficacy he ſticks not to affirm, that *he could do even all Things, through Chriſt ſtrengthening him.*

Phil. iv. 13.

The Prophet *David* had reſpect to this Aſſiſtance, when he promiſes for his own Diligence and Fidelity upon it: *I will run the way of thy Commandments, when thou haſt ſet my Heart at liberty*; and how chearfully he did this, is plain, from his profeſſing, that he *had greater Delight in theſe, than in all manner of Riches*; *that they were more to be deſired than Gold, or precious Stones, and ſweeter than Honey and the Honey-comb.* And thus, by magnifying not only the Advantage, but the Pleaſure of a virtuous Life, he utterly confounds all thoſe idle Pretences of Difficulty and Uneaſineſs, with which our own Sloth, or the Subtilty of the Tempter would deter us from it. And, if *David* could ſpeak ſo largely in commendation of the old Law, which yet was much harder than the new; how much more may Chriſtians alledge in vindication of a Covenant of Grace, where the Service is incomparably more eaſy, and the Aſſiſtances toward it more abundant and effectual?

Pſa. cxix. 19.

For I would aſk any Man, who ſcares himſelf with theſe fantaſtical Images of invincible Difficulty, to what Purpoſe he thinks *Chriſt* came into the World? Why did he take our Fleſh, and Labour, and Suffer, and Bleed, and Die for us? Why does he intercede ſo earneſtly with the Father, and appoint his Sacraments for conveyances of Grace? Why did he ſend his Spirit and publiſh his Goſpel? What are thoſe *Good Tidings* which the *Goſpel* reports? What mean thoſe terms of *Grace* and *Mer-*

often inculcated, and the ſweet and comfortable
ame of *Jeſus* ſo much repeated there? Does not Mat. i. 21.
this infer Deliverance from our Sins? From Sins
ſt, by the Death of our bleſſed Redeemer, and
om Sins to come, by the ſame Death, and the
elps of his Grace ſhed upon us more abundantly
an before? Was it not foretold, as one principal
nd of Chriſt's coming, *that the crooked ſhould be* Iſa. xl. 4.
de ſtreight, and the rough places plain? Were not
e Gifts of his Spirit diſtributed for this very Pur-
ſe, that the Exerciſe of Piety might be ren-
ed eaſy and delightful, that Men might have
uſt in Dangers, and Joy in Tribulations, and Aſſu-
nce of Victory, if they ſtrive lawfully? Is not this
e Deſign, the Subſtance, the Sum of the Goſpel,
e Promiſes of the Prophets, the Doctrine and Be-
f of all the Saints? The very thing wherein the
much boaſted Riches and Treaſures of God's
ercy in this new Covenant do truly and properly
nſiſt? So that to deny it, is in effect to evacuate
e whole Goſpel; and, if we ſuppoſe it impoſſible
us to get the better of our Sins, we plainly
ppoſe, that all *Chriſt* hath done and ſuffered for
hath been done and ſuffered in vain.

This might ſuffice to diſpoſſeſs Men of the No-
ns they frequently entertain, concerning the
rms of a Chriſtian's Duty, as if it were an im-
cticable, or an uncomfortable Undertaking.
, in regard theſe Temptations to feeble-mind-
eſs and dejection are both very uſual, and very
l too, I think it not amiſs upon this occaſion,
hew what particular Supports Men have, or may
e, in this Buſineſs, if they be not wanting in
due ſeeking and applying them. And here I
ll *firſt* of all inſtance in the ſundry Helps by
ch God facilitates the good Man's Duty; and
n, *ſecondly*, I will add ſome Inſtructions and Ad-
itions, how we may make our beſt Advantage
hoſe Helps.

T SECT.

SECT. II.

The Helps for making a Virtuous Life Eaſy.

TO pretend to give a particular Account o thoſe Excellent Arts and Means, made u of by God for the Cheriſhing, Comforting, an Strengthening the Souls of his faithful Servant were a very bold and a vain attempt. Many S crets of this kind there are, many Private ſigni cations of his Love, which none, but they wh feel, can either diſcover or conceive. My Ende vour therefore ſhall be to Mention thoſe know and ordinary ways only, by which the Scriptu tells us, God is wont to ſweeten the Obſervance his Laws, and to ſhew himſelf preſent with Go Men, for their Conſolation, and Encouragemen

1. The *firſt* of theſe is the Infuſion of his Gr into their Souls, which ſtrengthens Them, as did St. *Paul*, in Temptations, and Diſtreſſes. T force and efficacy whereof is ſuch, that it wo a thorough Change many times in the whole S of the Soul influenc'd by it; renders that cl which before was dark and doubtful; makes thi delightful, to which the Man before was m averſe; and thoſe eaſy, which he thought diffic and even impoſſible. With reſpect to this mig Alteration the Prophet ſays moſt emphatica

Ezek. vi. 26, 27. that *God would give his People a new heart, and a new Spirit within them, by this means cauſing t to walk in his Statutes, and to keep his Judgments do them.* What could be ſpoken more ſignifica of the Power of Divine Grace? What more p nently to the taking off the Scruples and Fear weak and doubting Chriſtians, than that, what they may find themſelves by Nature, they ſha made quite another ſort of Men by Grace? T St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of the Conqueſt over the ſe

Princ

rinciple within us, ſays, *We know this, that our* Rom. vi.
d man is crucified with Chriſt, that the Body of Sin 6.
ight be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve
n. By the *old man*, and the *body of ſin* the Apo-
e means our rebellious Appetites and Paſſions.
nd theſe are therefore ſaid to be *crucified* and *de-*
oyed with *Chriſt*; becauſe, by his Death, we ob-
n Grace and Power to reſiſt and mortify theſe
ppetites; and ſo to deliver ourſelves from the
ndage of Sin, as not to contract the guilt of con-
ting to it, if we will ourſelves aſſert our Free-
m. This is that noble Victory promiſed long
by *Iſaiah*, and applicable in its exalted and ſpi-
ual Senſe to every Chriſtian: *Fear thou not, for* Iſai. xli. 10,
m with thee, be not diſmay'd, for I am thy God; I 11, &c.
ſtrengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will up-
thee with the right hand of my righteouſneſs. Be-
, all they that were incenſed againſt thee ſhall be
amed and confounded, they that ſtrive with thee
ll periſh; thou ſhalt ſeek them that contended with
, and ſhalt not find them; for I the Lord thy God
hold thy right hand.

Thus ſhall theſe diſorderly Paſſions be as though
were not; that is, They ſhall prove no hin-
ce to our Salvation. Nay, they ſhall be bet-
han though they were not, and even promote
Virtue and Happineſs, if we take good care to
age them aright. For theſe Deſires and Paſſi-
are like wild Beaſts, fierce and furious in their
Nature, and bent upon rapine, and miſchief,
deſtruction; but when maſtered and tamed,
y God's Grace and our own Diligence they
be, they become exceeding uſeful and neceſ-
, and a Whet and Spur to our Virtues. Thus
er is ſerviceable to Zeal; Hatred to the irre-
lable averſion againſt Sin; Haughtineſs of
d to contempt of the World, and ſcorning to
ean and diſhonourable Things; Love, to the
ous Undertaking of hard and heroick Actions,

in conſideration of the Perſon for whoſe ſake w
do ſo, and the infinite Obligations which his Benefi
innumerable have laid upon us, to decline nothin
that may be acceptable to him. And beſides a
this, the very Conflict neceſſary for the ſubduin
theſe Paſſions, and that perpetual Struggle in whic
we are exerciſed, is appointed and left to us for o
mighty Advantage. This it is that finds Wo
for our Patience, our Humility, our Conſtanc
This makes our Deſert and our Victory in th
Life, and entitles us to our Glory and Crown in t
2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. Life to come, as St. *Paul* obſerves in his own Ca
and this, in Proportion, is the common Caſe of
Chriſtians.

It is then to no purpoſe, that the ſlothful M
cries out upon *a Lion in the way*, and pretends
Strength of his Paſſions, the Weakneſs and C
ruption of human Nature, the Tenderneſs of
Conſtitution, and his Inability to ſuſtain the Ha
ſhips and laborious Exerciſes of ſtrict Piety
Virtue: Theſe and whatever other Allegat
are cuſtomary upon this Occaſion, how gra
and ſolemnly ſoever urged in his own Vindicat
are all mere Excuſes, trifling, falſe, diſhonour
Excuſes; Detractions from the Merits and Effi
of Chriſt's Death, who is dead in vain, if he
not reſcued us from the Slavery of our Luſts,
render'd our Duty more pleaſant, and eaſy,
Rom. viii. 31. practicable than before. *For if God be with*
who can be againſt us? The Lord is our Light
Pſal. xxvii. 1, 2, 3. *our Salvation, whom then ſhall we fear? The L*
Pſal. xliv. 5. *the Strength of our Life, of whom ſhall we be afr*
Tho' an Hoſt were encamped againſt us, yet wil
not caſt away our Confidence. For God is on our
and thro' him will we overthrow our Enemies, and
them under that make head againſt us. Nay, we
do it with Eaſe: for ſo much intimates St.
1 John v. 3, 4. when he ſays, *God's Commandments are not grie*
and adds immediately, for *whatſoever is born of*
overc

ercometh the World; and *this is the Victory that ercometh the World, even our Faith:* 'Tis this reſo- te Perſuaſion of the Mind, this Dependance upon s Truth and Promiſes, by thoſe Aſſiſtances which e never wanting to true Believers, conquers the ifficulties and Temptations of the World, and akes the way of God's Commands ſmooth and eaſant. And ſo much of the *Firſt* and principal elp, the Source of all the reſt, the Grace of God ſpired into the Soul of every faithful Chriſtian, for s Strength and Comfort.

A *Second* thing, which contributes much to *ea-* g Chriſt's *Yoke*, and *lightning his Burden*, is, fer- nt Love of that God, whoſe Commandments we dertake to obey. And here I need not labour, ce every one's own Experience will tell him, w irreſiſtible the Force of this Paſſion is, and w ſupportable it renders the moſt difficult and inful Undertakings. What but this could make der and delicate Mothers take ſuch perpetual, h infinite Pains in bringing up their Children, d even rejoicing in their unwearied Labours for m? What but this ties us to the Beds of our Friends, in deſpite of all the Noiſomneſs of ir Diſeaſe, or all the Inconveniences which atching, or Attendance, or Infection, may bring on us? Nay, what elſe moves the very Brute ſts to ſpare from their own Food, to expoſe ir own Lives for the Suſtenance and Protection their Young? And therefore (as St. *Auguſtine* ſſes the Point) If the Merchants balk no Hazard Love of Gain; if Hunters are beat out of Field by no Weather, for Love of Sport; Soldiers march up to the Mouth of a loaded nnon, for Love of Booty: If Men can love the eatures ſo vehemently, that great Labours ſhall m eaſy, nay, that they ſhall ceaſe to ſeem La- urs, and be courted as Pleaſures; How much re ſhall the Love of good Men towards God,

Ser. ix. *de Verb. Dom.*

the beſt, the only perfect Object of their Affection
make all thoſe Pains eaſy and comfortable, whi
are taken with a deſign to pleaſe him here, and
order to a full and eternal Enjoyment of him her
after?

This Vehemence of Love was that which ſoftn
all that intolerable Anguiſh both of Body a
Mind, which *Chriſt* endured, and chearfully e
braced, for our ſakes. And the Deſire to retu
this Love was the Reaſon too, why ſuch bit
Sufferings ſeemed as nothing, to the Zeal of
Primitive Chriſtians. Priſons, and Racks, a
Fires and Croſſes, all were welcome for the ſa
of that Dear Lord and Maſter, in compariſon
whoſe Favour Life itſelf was not, ought not
be eſteem'd dear. Theſe are the natural Effects
true and fervent Love, to make Difficulties vani
and to render any thing which may recommend
to the Party beloved, however harſh in itſ
yet, with that Proſpect, ſweet, or at leaſt v
ſupportable: And much more may we expect
ſhould do thus with the Commandments of
mighty God, which, abſtracting from all ot
Conſiderations, are in themſelves moſt juſt
reaſonable, and worthy to be made every
Man's Choice. "He that truly loves God, h
"a Feeling of what I ſay; but if I ſpeak to a
"guid and cold Heart, it is no wonder, if he
"not underſtand me." And hence it ſeems to
that our Lord ſo very often mixes the mention
Love, with that of keeping his Commandme
As knowing it to be the only ſure Ground, u
which the Regard and Obſervance of them enti
depends. And the general Want of this no do
it is, that brings them under ſuch a general
reſpect. Thus we find him telling his Diſcip
If ye love me, keep my Commandments; and *he*
hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he
that loveth me; and, *If a Man love me, he will*

Aug. *in Joan. Tract.* 26.

John xiv. 15,21,23, 24.

my Words; *he that loveth me not, keepeth not my Sayings.* And St. *John* to the ſame purpoſe; *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, and his Commandments are not grievous.* They are not ſo, to one that loves him: This ſingle Conſideration renders them otherwiſe; becauſe he ſtudies to pleaſe God above all things, and ſo gets quit of that which makes every Action burdenſome, the doing it againſt a Man's Inclination and good liking. And this is ſo ſure a Mark, that my Reader will do well to meaſure himſelf by it; and to ſee by the Delight, or the Lothneſs and Diſreliſh he finds to good Actions, what Portion he hath, or whether indeed he have any, of true Love for his Lord and Saviour. 1 Joh. v. 3.

To theſe two I might add ſeveral other Privileges and Comforts of Piety and Virtue, infinitely to be preferred before all the Jollity and Enjoyments of the gayeſt and moſt proſperous Sinner in the World. And the next I ſhall name is, a certain peculiar Light of Underſtanding, ſtiled in Scripture Language, *Wiſdom*, and the *Knowledge of the Holy*. By which is meant, a ſingular Advantage of being directed more effectually than common Men, in ſpiritual Matters relating to Salvation, and the Means neceſſary for obtaining it. This *David* acknowledged as a Mercy from above: *Thou haſt made known to me the Way of Life: Thou makeſt me to underſtand Wiſdom ſecretly*; and *I have more Underſtanding than all my Teachers, for thy Teſtimonies are my Meditation. I am wiſer than the Antient, becauſe I keep thy Precepts.* This is that living *Light*, with which Chriſt is ſaid to *enlighten* his Servants, and the *Unction of the Holy One* to teach them all things. This is that *Writing of God's Law* in *Mens Heart*, promiſed by *Jeremiah*, and abundantly performed under this Seaſon and Covenant of Grace; and the being *taught of God* foretold by *Iſaiah*. In a word: This is that *Secret of the* Prov. ix. 10. Pſal. cxix. 99, 100. John i. 9. 1 John ii. 20. Jerem. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. Iſai. liv. John vi. Pſal. xxv.

Lord, *among them that fear him*; that ſovereign and uncommon Comprehenſion of the Laws of God, o the Excellency, the Wiſdom, the Advantages o them, which *David* ſo earneſtly deſires in that mo Divine *Pſalm*, which begins with this vehemen Expreſſion of his Eſteem for it. *Bleſſed are the Un defiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lor Bleſſed are they that keep his Teſtimonies, and that ſe him with their whole Heart.*

Pſal. cxix.

By this Illumination from above, directing goo Men ſo carefully, their Progreſs in Virtue mu needs be render'd very comfortable. For it is the Paſſage to Heaven, as in all the Journeys Me take in this World, the better Eyes any one hath and the more perfectly he underſtands his Wa the more chearfully and ſecurely he travels fo ward. It is of great Moment, to know whe we go, what we do, how we ought to govern o ſelves, what Meaſures are to be taken, what Pr cipices and wrong Paths to be avoided, and wh we are to expect at our Journey's End. Wi regard to all which we may underſtand that St. *Paul*, that *the ſpiritual Perſon judgeth and d cerneth theſe things*, but the carnal and natu Man is ſo blind and ſtupid, that he neither ſe them himſelf, nor receives them from ſuch as a both qualified, and deſirous, to inform him b ter. In the Perſon of theſe, *Iſaiah* deſcribes t Miſery of their State, *Judgment is far from neither doth Juſtice overtake us; we wait for Lig but behold Obſcurity; for Brightneſs, but we walk Darkneſs: We grope for the Wall like the Blind, a ſtumble at Mid-day, as in the Night.* This is t Calamity of wicked Men; they are not ſenſib what ſlippery Ground they are upon, nor whith the Way they are in, will certainly carry them laſt; but live in moſt dangerous and moſt uncon fortable Ignorance. *The Light of Righteouſneſs ha not ſhined unto them*, (as the Wiſeman introduc

1 Cor. ii. 15.

Iſai. lix. 9, 10.

Wiſd. v. 6, 7.

the

them complaining) *neither hath the Sun of Wiſdom riſen upon them, but they weary themſelves in the way of Wickedneſs and Deſtruction*: And, in proportion as the want of this Light muſt needs be weariſome and ſad, ſo the Enjoyment of it cannot but be very chearful and comfortable to the Holy and Good Man.

4. Another very remarkable Advantage, which contributes much to the rendring Virtue eaſy and pleaſant, is, That inward and ſecret Conſolation, with which God ſuſtains the Hearts of them that ſerve him faithfully. I call it *Secret*, becauſe They only know it who have received and felt it; for which reaſon *Chriſt* himſelf terms it the *Hidden Manna*, and *David* the *Plentiful Goodneſs*, *which God hath laid up for them that fear him.* Thus Almighty God promiſes, that *he will allure* the devout Soul, and *take her aſide into the Wilderneſs*, and *ſpeak friendly to her* in private. By all which Expreſſions of the *Wilderneſs*, and *Hidden*, and *laying up*, we are given to underſtand, that theſe Priviledges are peculiar to the Godly, and that carnal and vicious People have no part in this Bleſſed Favour.

Rev. ii. Pſal xxxi. Hoſ. ii. 14.

But now, how exceeding great, how ineſtimably ſweet theſe Heavenly Comforts are, to the Perſons that taſte and feaſt upon them, no Tongue of Men or Angels can expreſs. The abundance of their Joy *David* hath given us ſome Notion of, when he ſays, that with *God is the Well of Life*, and that Good Men ſhall *drink of his Pleaſures, as out of the River.* So largely do they indulge in them, as to have no reliſh left for any Satisfactions of this vain World, but, like St. *Peter* upon the Mount, ſeem to forget themſelves, and talk of building Tabernacles, that they may ſet up their Reſt here for ever. This is that *River of Pleaſure* at God's right Hand, which deſcends from above, and overflows the Hearts of the Pious with Joy inexhauſtible.

Pſalm xxxvi. 8. Mat. xvii.

ſtible. It is a Taſte of Heaven, while upon Earth to refreſh and keep them from fainting in their Journey thither. A Sample, as it were, of the precious Treaſure, which God puts into our Hands that we may judge of the true Worth of the Commodity, and, like wiſe Merchants, not grudge to come up to the Price, even though he ſhould require us to ſell all we have beſides for the Purchaſe of it. *This is that Voice of Joy and Health, in the dwelling of the Righteous*, with regard to which, the *Pſalmiſt* cries out in another place, *Bleſſed is the People, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee.* A Bleſſing which St. *Paul* was ſenſible of, when he ſaid *I am filled with Comfort, I am exceeding Joyful in all our Tribulation.* And what can be ſaid higher to deſcribe the Divine Power of this Spiritual Comfort, than that even Affliction and Perſecution can not deſtroy, cannot ſo much as damp it?

Pſalm cxviii. 15.

Pſalm lxxxix. 16.

2 Cor. viii. 4.

If my Reader be concerned to know, how it comes to paſs, that he hath never yet taſted the ſweet Comforts, of which others give ſuch a magnificent Account; I muſt anſwer him, that the Reaſon is more than intimated before. This is not Meat for every Mouth, but kept up in reſerve for the Beloved and Choſen of God. A Soul immerſed in Senſe and worldly Pleaſures cannot be Partaker of thoſe Dainties, nor will they dwell with polluted Thoughts and Deſigns. The *Ark* and *Dagon* could not ſtand upon the ſame Altar, nor will *Chriſt* ſubmit to ſhare the Heart with *Mammon*. God ſent no *Manna*, till all the Proviſion of *Egypt* was ſpent; and this Heavenly hidden *Manna* is tied to the ſame Rules; it will not deſcend till vain Cares and ſinful Inclinations are ſent off to make room for it. Though God be liberal, yet is he not laviſhly profuſe. He will not caſt his Pearls before Swine, nor give out Taſtes and Patterns, to Them who have no Diſpoſition to buy. Do but reſolve unfeignedly to ſerve him, and ſet about

in good earneſt, and then this Joy will flow in upon thee; and, as it never yet failed any Man, ſo it will be ſure not only to anſwer, but far exceed thy largeſt Expectations. The evil Habits of thy paſt naughty Life ſhall be no bar to it. For ſo abundantly kind and tender is the God we ſerve, that he is forward in encouraging all that ſincerely return to him, and takes particular care, that they who have forſaken him long and wandered far, ſhall meet with at leaſt as friendly Entertainment, when they flee to him for Mercy. as others who never broke looſe from him at all.

This the Parable of the Prodigal Son was deſigned purpoſely to aſſure us of; whoſe relenting Father received, and cheriſhed him, with greater Expreſſions of a ſollicitous and tender Affection, than he did the elder Brother, who had all along lived in his Family. And the Reaſons for this Behaviour ſeem to be two. The one the Joy for recovering one who ſeemed to be loſt, as our Saviour hath particularly illuſtrated the Caſe. The other, the Support and Encouragement of this returning Penitent, that he might have no reaſon to repent of his Bargain, but immediately feel the Advantage of ſo wiſe a Change. A Figure of this Proceeding with Chriſtians yet weak and timorous God ſeems to have given us, in that memorable Paſſage of his conducting the *Iſraelites* in their flight out of *Egypt*. *It came to paſs when* Pharaoh *had let the People go, that God led them not by the Way of the Land of the* Philiſtines, *although that was near; for God ſaid, leſt peradventure the People repent, when they ſee War, and they return to* Egypt: *But God led the People about through the way of the Wilderneſs of the Red Sea.* In like manner does he conſtantly conſider the preſent Circumſtances of his People; what their Infirmities and their Occaſions are: He is careful not to diſcourage them with Difficulties too mighty for them to encounter; but leads

Luke xv.

Exod. xiii. 17.

leads them ſafely and gently, and ſuſtains them with thoſe preſent Satisfactions, which Minds, yet feeble, and lately eſcaped from the Bondage of Sin, ſtand in need of to confirm them in their better Choice. O! Who can expreſs! Who can conceive! Who can admire, as it deſerves, this Love, this Management of our moſt wiſe, moſt indulgent Father!

5. A Fifth Privilege of Holy Men, which conduces very much to the Eaſe and Pleaſure of their Lives, is the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience. Of which St. *Paul* made ſo great Account, that he calls it his *Glory* and his *Rejoicing*. And of this is that Obſervation of the Wiſeman true in the best and ſtricteſt Importance of the Words, that *He that is of a merry Heart hath a continual Feaſt.* A Feaſt, which the Virtuous enjoy every Day of their Lives: And how then is it poſſible, that Minds thus quiet and ſecure ſhould live in ſuch uneaſineſs, as the Men of the World fondly imagine. On the other hand, the Conſciouſneſs and Reproaches of Guilt are an inſupportable Torment to wicked Men, who are inceſſantly ſtung, like *Cain* for the Murder of his Brother, and drive to all the Diſtractions of Deſpair, like *Judas* for his Treachery to his Maſter. This is that *never dying Worm* mentioned by our Bleſſed Saviour, which lies gnawing at their Hearts Night and Day. It muſt needs do ſo, becauſe Wickedneſs in its own Nature is determined to bear Teſtimony against itſelf; and a troubled Mind always foreboding dreadful Miſeries hanging over its Head, becauſe it is ſenſible of having deſerved them. The wretched Condition of ſuch People is well deſcribed in the Book of *Job*: *The wicked Man travelleth with Pain all his Days, and a dreadful Sound is ever in his Ears. He believeth not that he ſhall return out of Darkneſs, and he is waited for of the Sword. He wandreth abroad for Bread, ſaying, where is it? He knoweth*

2 Cor. i. 12.

Prov. xv. 15.

Gen. iv. Mat. xxvii. Mark ix.

Job xv. 20, &c.

hat the Day of Darkneſs is ready at his Hand. Trou-le and Anguiſh make him afraid, and prevail againſt im as a King ready to the Battel.

What Creature can be imagined in a more de-plorable Condition, than he, who thus carries his wn Death about him; What Fears, what Per-plexities, what horrible Deſpair, rend the Heart f this Wretch? Sinners, (ſays St. *Chryſoſtom* ve-ry truly) ſuſpect every thing; they ſtart at their own Shadow, tremble at every little Noiſe, and are jealous, that every Man they meet is ma-king at them to deſtroy them. If they ſee others talking, they preſently conclude themſelves to be the Subject of their Diſcourſe. Such is the Quality of Sin, that it betrays itſelf, without any Accuſer: It keeps the Committer in Fear, where there is no viſible Appearance of Dan-ger; *The wicked flee when no Man purſueth.* And why does he flee? Becauſe he hath an Accuſer within that is eternally purſuing him? This he carries about him, and cannot run away from the worſt and moſt importunate of all Accuſers, himſelf, and his own Conſcience, which dogs him wherever he goes, and is continually up-braiding and ſcourging, and wounding him in the tendereſt Part. But the *Righteous is bold as a Lion*; free and eaſy, and brave even in Dan-ger and Death itſelf." And thus much may erve for our fifth Conſideration.

Hom. 8. *ad pop. Antioch.*

Prov. xxviii. 1.

SECT. III.

ome other Helps and Comforts peculiar to good Men, and inſtrumental to their preſent Happineſs.

THE Privileges already mentioned lead us ve-ry naturally to the Diſcovery of Another, hich conſiſts in a lively Hope, and moſt glorious

Prospect of eternal Happiness and Salvation. And this is a noble Prerogative indeed; One of the richest Jewels imparted to Mortals, before they are admitted to a Participation of all the Fulness of their Heavenly Father's Treasures. This sweetens the bittersest Cup given us to drink in this Life, and turns Sorrow itself into Joy. By this, with St. Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. *Paul*, *We glory even in Tribulations*; because we *know that Tribulation worketh Patience*; *and Patience, Experience*; *and Experience, Hope*; *and Hope maketh not ashamed*. This is our mighty Stay amidst the Tossings and Tempests of a troublesome World; for so it is called, *an Anchor of the Soul, both sure and stedfast*; *a strong Consolation*, and *impregnable Refuge, fastened* upon the Promises, which *God, who cannot lie*, hath most solemnly made to his Servants. This is Heb. vi. 18, 19. that hardned *Helmet of Salvation*, which keeps off Eph. vi. all the Blows, by which the Devil and the World intend our Ruin, when they lay at us most furiously. In short, this is so firm a Defence to a good Man, that come Health or Sickness, Riches or Poverty, Prosperity or Disasters, Life or Death; though the Floods of Persecution arise, and the Waves and Storms roar and rage never so horribly, still the Language of his Heart is that of the Psalmist, *My trust is in God, I will not fear what can be done unto me*. Nay even with *Job* he declares, *Though the Lord slay me, yet will I hope in him*. And this is, what the Scripture calls the *Boldness of a Lion*, whose Excellence it is, to be then most courragious, when he is in greatest Danger.

But with the Ungodly it is not so: They have no part in this Confidence, no Inheritance in this Consolation. The Scriptures tell us, that such Mens Prov. xi. 7. Hope *is vain*, that *it shall perish*, that their Ex- Job xi. pectation is full of Terror instead of Comfort, and is even as *the giving up of the Ghost*. How can we suppose it should be otherwise, if we consider two Things? *First*, That whatever wicked Men pretend,

retend, their Confidence is not in God; but in
e World; *they truſt in the Arm of Fleſh*, as the
rophet expreſſes it, and make *Lies their Refuge*:
he Riches, and Strength, and Friendſhip, and
uthority, and ſuch other tranſitory Advantages
the preſent Life, as cannot but deceive them.
hus the *Hope of the Ungodly* is repreſented as *Duſt* Wiſd. v. 14.
rwn away with the Wind, as a *Froth or Bubble dri-*
n about in a Storm, as the *Smoak diſperſed here and*
ere with a puff of Air, as the Remembrance of a Gueſt
at tarrieth but a Day. So exceeding vain are all
e Objects of a Wicked Man's Truſt, ſo quickly
o they fail him, and ſo ſure are they to give way
d let him drive, upon the firſt ſpringing up of
dverſity.

'Tis true indeed, theſe Men would not be
ought to place their Confidence in theſe Things,
t in God only. But in this they diſſemble, and
erefore what one Holy Author calls the *Hope of* Prov. x.
e Wicked, another truly ſtyles the *Hope of Hypo-* Job viii. 13.
ites. For indeed with whom do theſe Perſons
nſult, or whence do they look for Aſſiſtance, in
their Difficulties? From God, or from the
orld? Is not This their Comfort in Affliction?
eir rejoycing in Proſperity? The End and Aim
all their Actions and Deſigns? Is the Honour
God any part of the Wicked Man's Intention,
his Law the Meaſure and Rule of his Proceed-
gs? How can then he depend upon the Aſſiſt-
ce of one, who hath no Part in the Work?
ow can he flee to him for Succour in thoſe Dan-
rs, for whoſe ſake they are not undergone? He
ilds not with the wiſe Man upon the Rock, but
s his tottering Foundation in the Sands; and
erefore (as our Lord hath warned him) *when*
e Rain deſcends, and the Winds blow, and the Floods
at upon this Houſe, (which if not before, will
rtainly happen at the Hour of his Death) the
ouſe muſt fall, and the fall thereof ſhall be great:

Great,

Great, for the Greatneſs and Sadneſs of the Change Great, for the Horrors which ſhall then aſſaul him; Great, for the Miſeries he ſhall then en dure; Great, for the unſpeakable Joys of Heave loſt; Great, for the exquiſite and eternal Tor ment he ſhall then be caſt into; Great, in ever Reſpect, that can juſtify our Lord's Choice o this Expreſſion. And this is ſufficient for the *fir* Reaſon, why the wicked Man's Hope muſt need be vain, becauſe the Object of it is no better tha Vanity; for it is not placed in God, but in th World.

The *Second* is, that though we ſhould allow Go to be really the Object of their Hope, yet is the Confidence altogether groundleſs, and not ſo pro perly Hope, as Preſumption. For, as the Scrip ture diſtinguiſhes between a *dead* unprofitab Faith, which profeſſes to believe without pract ſing accordingly, and a *lively* juſtifying Faith, whic proves and exerts itſelf by good Works; ſo a there likewiſe two Sorts of Hope, the one of t truly virtuous Man, which is the Fruit of a goo Life, and a good Conſcience; the other of t wicked Man, which not having the Foundati of a good Conſcience, does not ſo truly hope, without all Reaſon preſume upon things, to whi it hath no Title or juſt Pretenſion. St. *Jo*

1 John iii. 21. hath ſtated this Matter rightly, by ſaying, *Br thren, If our Hearts condemn us not, then have Confidence towards God*; that is, if the Senſe our own Guilt do not tell us, that we ought n to expect any Favour from him, whom we live Diſobedience to. And again more fully in t

Ver. 2. Words next following, *Whatſoever we aſk, we recei of him, becauſe we keep his Commandments, and thoſe things that are pleaſing in his Sight.* To t

1 Tim. i. 5. ſame Purpoſe St. *Paul*, *The End of the Comman ment is Charity out of a pure Heart, and a go Conſcience, and Faith unfeigned.* Which Paſſa

St. *A*

. *Auguſtin* ſo expounds it in ſeveral Parts of his Works, as from thence to argue, that there cannot any true Hope, where there is not firſt a good onſcience. St. *Paul*, ſays he, *adds* from a good onſcience, *upon the Account of the Chriſtian's Hope*; *De Doct.* *he that carries within him the Reproach and Con-* Chriſt. *diction of an evil Conſcience, deſpairs to attain the* *l.* 1. *c.* 10. *ings which he believes.* And again, *Every Man's pe is in his own Conſcience, and is proportioned, ac-ding as he feels himſelf to love God.* And once re *the Apoſtle puts a good Conſcience for Hope*; *for* *In Præf.* *only who hath a good Conſcience, can have the Hope* *Pſal.* 31. *a Chriſtian: Where Men are ſtung with the Guilt n evil Conſcience, they are forſaken of Hope, and have no other Proſpect than their own Damnation.* this I might add many other Teſtimonies; and the Advantage of good Men now under Confi-ation, as many other valuable Prerogatives; but ill only juſt touch upon two or three more, and n diſmiſs the Subject.

7. Of theſe, the *Firſt* ſhall be, That moſt deſi-e Liberty which good Men enjoy above the cked. This is the Purport of our Saviour's Pro-; *If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Diſ-* John viii. *s indeed*; *and ye ſhall know the Truth, and the* 31, 32. *h ſhall make you free:* So likewiſe St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. iii. *re the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty.* Now 17. his Freedom is meant, a Deliverance from the anny and Bondage of our ſinful and ſenſual petites, called, for Diſtinction's ſake, the infe-Part of the Soul. To which the Wicked more miſerably enſlaved, than any the moſt ched Captive in this World, to the moſt bar-us and bloody Maſter. For to what End do labour and drudge, and break their Sleep? not all in the Service of Senſuality, and to ify the meaner and brutal Paſſions of the Soul? Man that is over-ruled by any of theſe, how lute a Drudge is he? The Luſt of the Fleſh,

for inſtance, what a Tyranny does it exerciſe Not only the Perſons, who upon other accou were by the Heathen worſhipped as Gods, as *Ju ter*, and *Mars*, and *Hercules*, but which is mo authentick, the Strength of *Sampſon*, the Sanc ty of *David*, the Wiſdom of *Solomon*, all truck under this Uſurpation. Nor is her Power a Cruelty leſs upon Chriſtians who have not ſhak off this Yoke; the Adultereſs, though ſhe kn the Shame and Scandal, and Danger of her Crim the loſs of God's Favour, the irreconcileable H tred of her Husband, the Diſhonour of her mily, the Proſtitution of her Perſon, the Offe of all Good People; the Ruin of her Good Na and Body, and Soul at once; Though ſhe kn I ſay, all theſe to be the ſure Conſequence of Folly, yet this domineering Paſſion bears d all before it, and will be obeyed in deſpigh Reaſon, and the feeble pretences of Religion the contrary.

Nor is it in this ſingle Point alone, that the minion of Senſe is ſo abſolute; the Tyranny is verſal, and holds in every other guilty Paſ The Ambitious and Vain-glorious purſues his dow of Honour and Fame, with the ſame Ea neſs; he riſes early, and goes to Bed late; tr all Day, and beats his Brains all Night; fla and diſſembles, cringes in one Place, and l big in another; makes Friends, and pacifies mies; brings every Action, every Deſign o Life and Behaviour to bear down upon this Point; and ſuffers no Time though never ſo u ſonable, no Circumſtance though never ſo incon rable, no Project though never ſo foreign, ſo wicked, to paſs him; provided his Amb may be any way ſerved by it.

The Covetous Man's Caſe is directly the ſ and ſo is the Drunkard's, the Angry and Revе ful; and in a word, Every Man breathing

Pa

affions have got the upper hand of his Reaſon. So Slave that is chained in the Galleys, there to ow for his Life, endureth ſo mercileſs a Captivi- . His Priſon and Fetters confine his Body only, t this Man's Mind is manacled and locked: His ery Senſe, his Thoughts, and Faculties, are all und up; and never was there a truer Maxim in very utmoſt Extent of the Words, than that of r Bleſſed Saviour, *He that committeth Sin is the vant of Sin.* For as St. *Peter* obſerves, *of whom Man is overcome, of the ſame is he brought into ndage.* Joh. viii. 34. 2 Pet. ii. 19.

Now from this Servitude the Righteous are de- ered, by the prevailing Power of *Chriſt*, and mighty Aſſiſtances of his Grace, ſo that they vern their Paſſions and Senſual Inclinations, in- d of being governed by them. This is the ſpi- al Importance of that Promiſe in *Ezekiel*, *They ll know that I am the Lord, when I have broken Bands of their Yoke, and delivered them out of Hand of thoſe that ſerved themſelves of them.* Ezek. xxiv. 27.

is is the Benefit, which *David* ſeems to have in view, when he makes that affectionate Ad- s, *Behold, O Lord, how that I am thy Servant, n thy Servant, and the Son of thine Handmaid; baſt broken my Bonds in ſunder, therefore will I unto thee the Sacrifice, of Thankſgiving.* And *Paul* yet more expreſsly, according to the Geni- f the Evangelical Style, ſays, *Our Old Man is ified, that the Body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that eforth we ſhould no more ſerve Sin.* By the *Old n* and the *Body of Sin* underſtanding that origi- Concupiſcence, which lurks in all our Hearts, and mpts us to Wickedneſs; and by the *Crucifixion Deſtruction* of this, ſuch a Subduing and Mor- ng of this evil Principle, that we do not obey regular Motions, but by the Grace of God are ntirely ſuperior to them, as if it did not ſubſiſt ſt in us at all. Pſa. cxvi. 16. Rom. vi. 8.

8. Upon this Privilege of Liberty there natur-
ly follows another, which is, Great Peace, a
Calmneſs, and orderly Compoſure of Mind; Whe
as the Wicked are perfectly over-run with in
ſtine War, and Confuſion. And therefore by t
Iſa. lvii. 20. Prophet reſembled to a *troubled Sea, whoſe Wat*
caſt up Mire and Dirt; and, by St. *James*, to
James iv. City whoſe Inhabitants are all up in a Mutiny, a
divided into Parties and Factions among the
ſelves. So that, while Good Men are ſerene a
quiet within, and act with great Tranquility a
Conſiſtence with themſelves, becauſe they are
verned by the one ſteady and uniform Principle
Reaſon, reduced to the Obedience of God's La
the Wicked are diſtracted and perplexed, like
Ship toſſed and driven to and fro with violent
contrary Winds. For theſe Luſts of Concu
cence are many and almoſt infinite, and theſe p
ſue infinite Objects, and are never ſatisfied,
perpetually crying out, *Give, Give.* For, whe
the Ambitious contented with Honour, or the
continent with Carnality, or the Covetous
Wealth? So that a Man in the midſt of the
like a Parent among a great Family of Child
calling for more Meat than can be had, to ſu
their Hunger. Clamours and Importunities p
his Ears on every ſide, and he is not able to gr
the leaſt of thoſe Wants or Requeſts, with w
he is Teized and Tormented. But beſides
theſe Deſires are inſatiable, and not to be qu
though we could attend to each of them diſt
ly; they are alſo very often contrary to one
ther, and ſo oppoſite in their Demands, that
not poſſible to comply with one, without a
ſame time contradicting another: and all *Ba*
in the unmortified Man's Breaſt, in its utmoſt
fection. Thus vain Thirſt of Honour cries,
Liberally, and Coveteouſneſs calls out, *Spare a*
can; Laſciviouſneſs ſays, *Venture for Pleaſ*

le replies, *Pleaſure is bought too dear with Shame.* ger puſhes on to Revenge; Ambition perſuades diſſemble an Injury, rather than make an Ene- . In a word, here the Prophet's remark is ac- pliſhed, *I have ſpied Unrighteouſneſs and Strife he City. Unrighteouſneſs*, becauſe none of thoſe ggeſtions are from a Good Principle, and *Strife*, auſe they are full of Contradiction, and not to reconciled with one another. And from this nfuſion nothing can deliver us, but that Peace of d, which Religion alone can give, alone can e. And who now can doubt the Truth of our rd, when he calls his *Yoke eaſy, and his Burden t*; ſince the Aſſiſtance of Grace, the Love of d, an enlightened Underſtanding, internal Con- tion, a quiet Conſcience, a chearful Hope, per- Freedom of Soul, Calmneſs and Conſiſtence of nd, all conſpire to render a virtuous Life eaſy pleaſant? Who can juſtly complain of Uneaſi- s, who hath all theſe Comforts to ſuſtain and ar his Heart?

cannot let this Argument go without deſiring e once more to reflect, upon what in part hath n ſpoken to already; The different Expecta- s of good and evil Men; How unſpeakable pport the one muſt needs find from an aſſured pectation of Eternal Glory and Happineſs; how ny ſad Girds the Other cannot but feel from Apprehenſion of Damnation and Everlaſting rments in Hell. Were this alone the matter in ference betwixt them; How would the painful- Life be ſoftened by that Hope? How would the ſt exquiſite Pleaſures of Sin and Senſe be embit- ed by theſe Fears? The Labourer encourages ſelf to bear the Toil and Heat of the Day, by Thoughts of his Pay at Night. If two Men were n the Road toward their own Country; The called Home to be advanced and rewarded, the er to be arraigned and put to Death; do we

ſuppoſe theſe Men could behave themſelves alik
or be equally pleaſant in their Paſſage? Whatev
Face the Malefactor might put upon the Matt
there is no doubt, but his Heart would give h
many a Twinge, and feel now and then a c
Qualm come over it, notwithſtanding all
counterfeit Mirth. And this to be ſure is
Condition of Wicked Men, when Death and
future State preſent themſelves to their Thoug
How differently muſt a Good Man think of le
ing the World, which is his Priſon and Place
Suffering, when he exchanges this Life for one
Joy and Bliſs ineſtimable? But how mel
choly and diſmal are the Preſages and Approac
of that fatal Hour, which muſt certainly and ſho
come? What a Heart-breaking is every Reme
brance of it to them, who, when *they die their*
pectation periſhes; who are not only to hope
nothing better hereafter, but to endure a great
more and worſe, than was poſſible for them ei
to feel, or to conceive here?

If then theſe Things be ſo, what ſhould ſtop
Reader from taking up, now at leaſt, that H
Reſolution, to which I am all this while en
vouring to gain him over? Will he ſtill perſi
objecting the Difficulty of the Attempt, and
Unpleaſantneſs of the Way? Will he believe o
People, who tell him ſo, though they have n
made the Experiment, nor know any thing
the Matter? Methinks he ſhould rather bel
the Declarations of his Lord and Saviour, affi
ing the contrary; Believe his own Reaſon, w
upon a fair weighing the ſeveral Arguments al
dy produced, and the Quality of thoſe Ingredie
which make the Happineſs of Virtue, will
the Scale on that ſide; Believe the Teſtimo
of Holy and Excellent Perſons, who ſpeak f
their own Perſonal Knowledge, and long Ex
rience: Such as *David*, St. *Paul*, and St. *J*
heretofo

heretofore; And many hundreds more, which, by the Grace of God, are converted daily from a vicious Life, and the Captivity of Satan, to the Love and Practice of Virtue, and the Glorious Liberty of the Children of Light. For even this Age, profligate and exceeding perverſe though it be, yet wants not the Inſtances of many happy Souls, who bear a Teſtimony to this Truth, and rejoice in the Comforts of Holineſs, and proclaim with Thankfulneſs their own Felicity; not only, that what I have ſaid is true to the uttermoſt, but that they feel more inward Peace, and ſweet Satisfaction in the Ways of Godlineſs, than I, or any Tongue living, ever hath ſaid, or ever can ſay in the Matter.

It is indeed a mighty Change, which is wrought in the Converſion of a Sinner; that Pride ſhould be turned into Humility, Covetouſneſs into Contempt of the World; Luxury and Laſciviouſneſs into Mortification and Purity; Revenge and Anger, into Meekneſs and Charity; in ſhort, that the Man ſhould no longer be the ſame, but in Affections, Temper and Delights, juſt the Reverſe of what he was before; and all this too, by that Alteration to which his own Will muſt concur. Theſe are Effects, which it is not to be wondered if ſome Men think impoſſible; and in that Thought never attempt this Change. But this hath been the Caſe, and theſe the Doubts, of many Holy and excellent Men, * who yet upon Tryal have found the Grace of God able to conquer all Difficulties; and have taken marvellous Delight in thoſe things, to which the vicious Courſes of their former Lives had once rendred them moſt averſe: They have found that very feaſible, which they ſeemed utterly impracticable; and have been tranſported with ſuch abundance of Joy, that their Hearts have ſcarce been able to contain, to bear it. And therefore I would beg thee to make the

* *See Cypr. l. 1. Ep. 1. ad Donat. Auguſtin. Conf. l. 6. c. 12, 13, 14, 15.*

Experiment. Much may be gained but nothin can be loſt by it. The matter is of vaſt impor tance, and worth venturing for; and if thou ſuc ceed, (as certainly ſucceed thou wilt, if thy Reſo lutions be ſincere and vigorous) thou art certain t gain as much as the immortal Happineſs of thy Sou and all the Glories of a Heavenly Kingdom a worth. And who in Matters of leſs Moment d clines ſuch a venture, where the advantage is i eſtimably great, and the hazard is ſo ſmall, indee is none at *all?*

SECT. IV.

A neceſſary Caution to ſuch as attempt this Chang

ONE thing is neceſſary to be premiſed her in order to the preventing all Diſcourag ments, that may ariſe to them who ſhall comp with this Advice. Which is, that This, like a other great Alterations, will require time to re der it eaſy to us. A Man muſt not depend up all theſe Joys at his firſt ſetting out, but ought prepare himſelf for ſtrong Encounters, much R luctancy, ſharp Temptations, and violent Co flicts with himſelf for a time. It was the Son *Sirach*'s Counſel: *My Son, if thou come to ſerve t Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation. Set thy hea aright, and conſtantly endure, and be not impatient time of trouble.* The reaſon of This is very obviou For, while the Devil keeps quiet Poſſeſſion, he ha nothing to do, but to ſooth and lay the Man aſlee by ſuggeſting freſh Delights perpetually, and m niſtring to carnal and worldly Satisfactions. Bu when he ſees him attempting to break looſe, a make an eſcape from his Snares, then he begins rage, and tries all means poſſible to maintain h uſurped Dominion over him. In this he reſembl th

Eccluſ ii. 1, 2.

he Spirit diſpoſſeſt by our Lord, immediately af- Mat. ix.
er his Transfiguration. It was Dumb and Deaf,
while let alone, but when commanded to go out,
t began to roar and foam, and tore the Body, lea-
ing it for dead. Thus *Laban* concealed his En-
y to *Jacob*, and never Perſecuted him, till he had
reſolved to depart. And *Pharaoh* doubled his Ty-
anny upon the Children of *Iſrael*, when he perce-
ved them diſpoſed to quit his Countrey. And
heir Deliverance from the Bondage of *Egypt* hath
lways been underſtood, as a Type and Image of
he Deliverance of Souls from the ſlavery of Sin and
atan.

St *Auguſtine* was in this particular a very lively
xample of the methods, by which great Sinners
re brought over from Vice to Virtue. The ac-
ount given of his own Converſion, in his Books
f *Confeſſions*, is well worth our ſerious Peruſal,
nd capable of Miniſtring greatly to our Comfort
nd Inſtruction. There we ſhall find the ſore and
ong Combats with his Ghoſtly Enemy, before he
ould get clear of him; ſo much the ſorer and
onger as he was afterwards a brighter Light in the
hurch of God. And this may well animate thoſe
ho feel violent Oppoſitions to their Amend-
ent, becauſe it is a ſign of more plenteous Mea-
ures of Grace, and glorious Things, which God
tends to do by Them, if they have the Courage
anfully to go through with their good Intentions.
t. *Paul*'s Converſion hath greater marks of Vio-
nce in it, than any other we Read of; he was
ruck Blind, he was caſt down to the Ground, he
as ſtunned with Thunder. And, Why all this, Acts ix.
ut becauſe he *was a choſen Veſſel to bear Chriſt's* 22, 26.
ame to the Gentiles, and to ſuffer many and great
ings for his Sake?

There again we ſee an eminent Inſtance of the
mnipotence of God, in reforming a Perſon of
ong, and once moſt ungoverned Paſſions, of
confirmed

confirmed Habits in the very worſt, and ſuch a
are commonly reputed the moſt incurable Diſeaſes
Such as Ambition, Avarice, Uncleanneſs, and ma
ny others which the Patient himſelf before h
Converſion, thought it altogether impoſſible
ſubdue. There again we have not only an inti
Victory over thoſe Paſſions, but much more Charm
and ſenſible Delight in the Conqueſt, than ev
there had been before in the Gratification of ther
Laſtly, here we may obſerve, in this holy Man
Example, a Pattern for our Inſtruction and Imit
tion: In examining, and furthering our Ca
by reading Good Books, conferring with Goo
Men, applying ourſelves to the ſtudy of the Ho
Scriptures, hearkening and opening to *Chriſt* wh
he knocks at the Door of our Hearts, Praying a
Weeping, and Private Meditation; deteſting a
avoiding all Wicked Suggeſtions, which wou
diſſuade us from a Compliance with the Mo
ons of the Good Spirit; and, upon Conviction wh
he would have us to do, breaking off from t
World and its Vanities, and betaking ourſelv
to our Duty, without any manner of Delay. Th
are the things that qualify Men for Spiritual Con
lation and Delight; and all they who beha
themſelves according to this Rule, ſhall be ſu
to find it, if not in the higheſt Perfection that
mortal State is capable of, yet, to be ſure, in ſu
a Meaſure, as the preſent Condition of their Sou
requires.

And therefore, upon this occaſion, I muſt a
viſe my Reader to quit himſelf like a Man, and n
ſpare himſelf at the beginning. The Corrupti
of Nature aſks ſome Violence to bring it unde
and our Paſſions, like Fire, muſt be plyed clo
and ruſhed upon at once, if we would put the
out effectually. I will conclude this Matter wi
a Paſſage of St. *Bernard*, deſcribing both the M
thods and the happy Effects of Reformation,

terr

terms very applicable to our preſent Purpoſe. "*Chriſt*, ſays he, calls to us, *Take my Yoke upon you, and ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls.* This Invitation is ſtrange and new, but it is made by one who makes all things new. He that takes a Yoke upon him finds reſt. He that leaves all gains a hundred Times as much. So, in the Old Teſtament, God ſaid to *Abraham*, *Sacrifice thy Son whom thou loveſt, and thus ſhall all Nations be bleſſed in thy Seed.* In offering *Iſaac* he did not kill but ſanctify him. If then thou art called upon to offer up thy *Iſaac*, thy Joy and Delight, be not afraid to obey the Command. Whatſoever Conſtruction Nature may put upon the Matter, depend upon the Promiſe. The Ram, and not *Iſaac* ſhall die; thy true Joy ſhall not periſh, but they depraved Affection; whoſe Horns are entangled in the Thicket, and cannot continue in thee without great Allay, and much Anxiety. God proves thy Sincerity, and thy Love for him, as he did *Abraham*'s. *Iſaac* thy Spiritual Delight ſhall live: only this muſt be bound upon the Wood, that thou mayſt Glory, not in thy own Fleſh, but in the Croſs of thy Lord; by whom thou art crucified indeed, but *crucified to the World:* For unto God thou liveſt ſtill, and liveſt much more truly than thou didſt before." And ſo much for the ſecond Hindrance to Holy Reſolution.

CHAP.

CHAP. III. SECT. I.

The Third Obſtruction conſidered; Fear of Perſecution and Affliction.

FROM the Conſideration of that inward Peacefulneſs and mighty Satisfaction, which the former Chapter hath proved to be the Portion of the Godly in Oppoſition to that Uneaſineſs falſly charged upon Virtue, by thoſe that are unacquainted with it; it is fit we now proceed to conſider the Afflictions of good Men. For it is very poſſible, that ſome, who are convinced of the Pleaſurableneſs and true Content of a holy Converſation, ſo far as the Practice of Religion itſelf is concerned, may yet think it hard to acquieſce with the Incumbrance of Perſecution or Affliction, and eſteem themſelves, not excuſable only, but Men prudent and well adviſed, if they decline reſolving to live well, at ſuch Times, and in ſuch Circumſtances, when they are certainly to ſuffer for ſo doing. Now this Difficulty indeed is as meer a Pretence as either of the former; For *Firſt*, it ſtands upon a falſe Bottom, and then from that ſuppoſed Ground it draws a falſe Conſequence. The Ground it proceeds upon is this, that a Man may live virtuouſly and ſerve God very well in ſome Caſes, and yet enjoy his Worldly Eaſe at the ſame Time, without any Moleſtation or Suffering at all. And this I call a falſe Ground, becauſe though outward Perſecutions and Afflictions are limited to Times and Places, and more or leſs in ſome or others, yet is there no Seaſon, no Part of the World, in which Religious Men do not meet with ſome Contradiction and Trouble both External and Internal. And though the Comforts and Aſſiſtances they receive from God are much more than

than a counterbalance to their Troubles, and even sweeten their bittereſt Cup; yet are thoſe Troubles in themſelves both numerous and weighty, and ſuch they prove, when they fall with their full Force upon the Wicked and Impatient, who want the Supports peculiar to the Godly. The Inference deduced from this Ground is likewiſe unjuſt. For it ſuppoſes ſuffering to be a good Reaſon for declining the Service of God, whereas in Truth, God ordains and makes uſe of this as a means of drawing us cloſer to him, and weaning our Affections from the World. I ſhall therefore, for the ſetting this Matter in its true Light, branch out my preſent Diſcourſe into four Particulars. *Firſt*, I will enquire, whether it be uſual for all good Men, in order to Salvation, to ſuffer ſome kind of Trouble and Perſecution, that is, whether this be appointed by God, as an ordinary Inſtrument of bringing Men to perfect Holineſs here, and Happineſs hereafter. *Secondly*, I ſhall examine into the Reaſons, why God, who loves good Men ſo tenderly, does yet chuſe to exerciſe them after this Manner. *Thirdly*, I ſhall ſhew, what Grounds of Comfort and Contentedneſs a good Man may have in the midſt of ſuch Troubles; and *Fourthly*, How ſuch Perſons ought to behave themſelves, when it ſhall pleaſe God to permit Afflictions to fall upon them. All which taken together will, I doubt not, give every unprejudiced Reader Satisfaction in this Point, and remove thoſe Scruples, which this Objection is apt to raiſe in his Mind.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Whether Suffering be the Lot of all good Men?

OF this, one would imagine, there ſhould ne
little Proof, after our Bleſſed Saviour hath
ſolemnly warned his Diſciples, and in them all
John xvi. 33. faithful Servants, that *in the World they ſhall ha*
Tribulation; and accordingly, hath command
Luke xxi. 19. them to *poſſeſs their Souls in patience*, that is, to pr
2 Tim. iii. 12. vide for the bearing Adverſities with Conſtancy a
a firm Reſolution. St. *Paul* declares without E
Acts xiv. 22. ception, that *all who will live godlily in Chriſt Jeſu*
ſhall ſuffer Perſecution; and, that we *muſt throu*
much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God;
if there were no other way to come at that Kin
dom, but this. We are likewiſe told, that *whe*
Heb. xii. 6. *God loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every S*
whom he receiveth; Nay, the Matter is carried
far, as to make the Freedom from Troubles a ve
ſuſpicious Sign, that we are not true Children:
is ſaid again, that *if we ſuffer with Chriſt we ſh*
2 Tim. ii. 12. *alſo reign with him*, as if the former were an ind
penſable Condition of the latter; and, when *D*
Pſa. xxxiv. 19. *vid*, in Concurrence with all theſe Teſtimonies, o
ſerves, that *great are the troubles of the righteous*, w
have reaſon from the whole to conclude, th
Troubles are the diſtinguiſhing Character, whi
God's beloved Children are to be known and di
cerned by.

This Truth, though but little underſtood, a
leſs conſidered, by the Men of the World, is in
plyed and differently intimated to us, throughou
the whole Courſe of the Scriptures. Thus o
Saviour declares, *He came not to ſend Peace, but*
Matth. x. 34. *Sword*; and St. *Paul*, that *no Man can be crown*
2 Tim. ii. 5. *except he fight lawfully*; but all fighting implies O
poſition and Difficulty, and an Enemy to grapp
wit

with To the ſame purpoſe *the Hidden Manna*, (Heaven and its Joys) is ſaid to be reſerved for *Him that overcometh*. The Ship, in which *Chriſt* and his Diſciples were overtaken with a Storm, hath ever been eſteem'd a lively Emblem of thoſe Troubles and Afflictions, with which all that Embark with Him in the Service of God, are toſt upon the Waves of this Tempeſtuous World. Thus again our Life is ſtyled a *Warfare upon Earth*, and *Man's days* ſaid to be *few and full of Miſery*. Of which that ſingle Proof is Evidence ſufficient, that, ſince the Fall, God hath appointed the Pains of Death, as an unavoidable Paſſage to the Regions of Joy: And the infinite Contradictions and Troubles, both from within and without, bring the Truth of all the former Texts home to every Man's own Senſe and Experience. Within, are the rebellious Motions of depraved Appetites, and thoſe Struglings of the Mind which keep up a perpetual Sedition in our Breaſts, and make them always the Seat of War. Without, we have the World and the Devil ever aſſaulting us, by all manner of means, ſometimes flattering us with deceitful Promiſes; ſometimes terrifying us with angry Menaces; ſometimes playing the part of fair and open Enemies; to others, betraying us in the Diſguiſe of treacherous Friends. And it is the Chriſtian's proper Buſineſs, to contend with all theſe manfully; for upon his Perſeverence and Victory depends the Crown of everlaſting Salvation.

Rev. ii. 17. Mat. viii. Job vii. 1.

That this in Fact hath always been ſo, the Examples of the moſt renowned Saints, from the beginning of the World, abundantly teſtify. Theſe all, as Partakers of Original Sin, were not only attacked perpetually from within, by their own inward Corruptions, but from without, by great variety of Afflictions. Thus *Abel*, for his ſincere and acceptable Service of God, was murdered by his wicked Brother, and *Abraham*, the choſen of

Gen. iv. 1, 2, &c.

the Lord, was expoſed to many Hardſhips and Dangers. His Poſterity, who were God's peculiar, were *Abraham*'s Children in Affliction too and the Blood of the Prophets from Age to Age was ſhed on every ſide of *Jeruſalem*. The Sufferings of *Job* are very wonderful, and yet theſe came by God's ſpecial Appointment, notwithſtanding the Teſtimony himſelf gave of him, that he was *perfect and upright, and ſo juſt that there was none like him in all the Earth.* I might inſtance in *David*, and ſome others particularly, but that the Apoſtle's Account of the Saints under the Old Teſtament may very well ſerve for all; who tells us, *they were tortured, they were mocked, they were ſcourged, they were impriſoned, they were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were ſlain with the ſword, they wandered about in ſheeps-ſkins, and goat-ſkins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered about in deſarts, and mountains, and dens, and caves of the Earth*; and yet theſe are the Perſons, *of whom the world was not worthy.* And the reaſon why they were not delivered from theſe Miſeries was, that their Reſurrection and future Reward might be the more Glorious for enduring them. This was the Caſe of the beſt Men under the Old Teſtament.

Job. i. 8.

Heb. xi. 35, 36, &c.

The New is expreſly founded upon the Cross. The *Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through Sufferings*; and it *behoved him*, as himſelf affirms, *to endure many things, and ſo enter into his Glory.* Since then our Lord hath told us, that *the Servant is not above his Maſter*, we have reaſon to conclude that they, who partake of his Glory, muſt expect to bear a part in his Sufferings too. And thus it happened to his deareſt Friends. Of his Mother, *Simeon* propheſied, that *a Sword ſhould pierce through her Soul.* And of the Apoſtles, we have undeniable Proof, that their Labours and Sufferings, their Perſecutions and Neceſſities were infinite

Heb. ii. 10. Luke xxiv. 26. John xv.

Luke ii. 35.

finite; and to mere Flesh and Blood insuppor-
ble: After all which it pleased God to require
ir Blood to be spent in his Service. Thus not
e of them died a natural Death, St. *John* only
cepted, and he came not behind the rest in
fferings, though his Life was preserved by Mi-
le from those that sought it. His Exile into Tertul. *de*
tmos, and his Caldron of scalding Oil, abundant- *præscript.*
made good the Prediction of our Lord concern- Hieron.
him, and his Brother *James*, that they should *contra*
eed *drink of the Cup he drank of, and be baptized* *Jovin.*
h *the Baptism that he was baptized with.* But, Matth. xx.
y should I insist upon particular Examples, when
rist himself hath laid down this general Rule,
t *if any Man do not take up his Cross, and follow* Luke xiv.
, *he cannot be his Disciple?* Which plainly inti-
tes that every Man will meet with Afflictions of
own, to exercise his Meekness and Patience;
that the following his Leader in these Vir-
, is the only Method by which Salvation can
had.

But here it may be urged, that the Matter can-
possibly be, as we have represented it. For,
o Man can be saved without Affliction, and
bulation; what then will become of all those,
o live in Times of publick Peace and Prosperi-
, and in Places, where Religion is so far from
g persecuted, that the Civil Sanctions do their
ost to encourage and promote it? To this I
wer, *First*, That allowing there should be any
Time and Place, where the Practice of Good-
meets with no Opposition or Disturbance
n without; yet the Persons who live in it are
in so much greater Danger. The Effects of
sperity described by the Prophet upon wicked
n, having too frequent and natural Influence
upon otherwise virtuous Dispositions, That
People are not plagued like their Neighbours, Psal. lxxiii.
come into any Misfortune like other Men, Pride

uſually compaſſes them about as a Chain, and Viole
covers them as a Garment: Their Eyes ſwell w
Fatneſs, and they follow the Luſts of their own He
So that their Virtue in ſuch Circumſtances run
much greater Hazard, than it would in a Sea
of Diſtreſs. But my *Second* Anſwer is, That th
never was, nor will be any time ſo void of Tr
ble, as not to furniſh a Croſs for thoſe Diſciple
Chriſt, who are content to take it up. Are th
not always Poverty, or Sickneſs, or Calumny,
Spight, or Injuries, or Contradictions, or ſo
other Evil of this Kind offered to good Men c
tinually? Do there ever want ſuch *ill-diſp*
Wretches as the *Pſalmiſt* complains of, who re
Pſal. cix. to peaceable and virtuous People *Evil for G*
and Hatred for their Good-will? Are we not alw
peſter'd even with Foes of our own Houſh
Kindred, or Acquaintace, that obſtruct our
Deſigns, and draw us off, or cool us at l
when we ſet ourſelves moſt zealouſly to the
vice of Almighty God? But if there were
of all theſe, yet is any Man exempted from
orderly Affections, the moſt dangerous Ene
of all the reſt, and ſuch as it is not poſſible to
any Truce with? Is there a Day, an Hou
Inſtant, when ſome Temptation or other, o
World, or the Devil, is not making Atte
upon us: Attempts which it is much more
cult to ſecure ourſelves from in Time of P
and Wealth, than in the ſoreſt Adverſit
hotteſt Perſecution? For the Fable of the
and the Wind gives us a very juſt Repreſent
of all Mankind; many more whereof periſ
Flattery than by Force. We ſee how gall
David acquitted himſelf againſt the moſt fu
Aſſaults of Adverſity, and yet how infamouſ
was baffled in a proſperous Condition. So
there needs no publick Calamities, to render
good Man's Life a State of Tribulation; his Vi

ll be obſtructed and reſiſted more than enough, thout being openly perſecuted; and the pro- ndeſt Peace abroad will put an End to that rpetual War he hath to wage at home. When ward Oppoſition ceaſes, the inward is left ſtill, d often grows more furious, and more trouble- me upon theſe Occaſions. Then Afflictions and oſſes will conſtantly await us; and the *Firſt* int is evident, which aſſerts theſe to be the Lot every Diſciple of *Chriſt Jeſus*.

SECT. III.

e Reaſons, for which God, notwithſtanding his Love for Good Men, ſuffers them to be thus Af- flicted.

NOW here it ought to be a ſufficient Satiſ- faction to us, that Almighty God, in his In- ite Wiſdom, hath thought fit thus to order the atter. For we may be ſure, that whatever Ex- dients he pitches upon, they are always the ſt proper for the Purpoſes he intends them to ve. And ſince he hath given us the Hope and ſpect of ſo excellent and glorious a Reward, s but reaſonable, that our ſhort Labours and ferings in this preſent State ſhould prove us thy of his Favour, and the ineſtimable Benefits pared for us hereafter. But we need not reſt e; for God hath not only declared to us his ll, but ſeveral weighty Reaſons, which deter- e him to it. And therefore for our farther En- ragement, I ſhall here mention ſome, which abundantly convince Men of his Fatherly Care Goodneſs, even toward thoſe, who are moſt vouſly afflicted, during their Paſſage through Valley of Tears.

1. And *First*, This Diſpenſation is therefo highly reaſonable, becauſe it increaſes our Virt in this Life, and by conſequence our Glory in t next; The Meaſure whereof depends upon Degree of our Deſert here. For his Juſtice a Wiſdom having determined, that none ſhall crowned but they who fight; the ſharper th Combats are, in which, by the Aſſiſtance of *Grace* we come off Conquerors, the brighter be that Crown laid up for us at the Reſurrection the Juſt. This is St. *Paul*'s Meaning, when

Heb. xi. ſpeaks of ſome, who would *not accept Delivera that they might obtain a better Reſurrection.* A

Matth. v. 10, 11, 12. our bleſſed Lord's in pronouncing thoſe *Happy are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake, becauſe th is the Kingdom of Heaven.* And again, *Bleſſed ye, when Men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, ſpeak all manner of evil againſt you falſly for my N ſake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is Reward in Heaven.* This is the true Importanc

Matt. xvi. 19. *ſaving our Life by loſing it*, and *receiving an hun Fold* for all the Advantages his Diſciples had ted upon his Account. Hence are thoſe Pron to voluntary Poverty, and renouncing our Will, in Obedience to *Chriſt*'s: All which are g Conflicts againſt the World, and our own ſe Inclinations; and cannot be performed, wit much Suffering, and very ſenſible Affliction. a word, this Argument is the Subſtance of

2 Cor. iv. 17. Text in St. *Paul*, that *theſe light Afflictions whic but for a Moment, work out for us a far more ex ing and eternal Weight of Glory.*

2. Another Reaſon for this Diſpenſation is draw us, by this Means, from the Love of

Jam. iv. World, which, as St. *James* obſerves, is *En with God.* He weans us by embittering our lights, and uſes the ſame Method of calling u

Luke xv. himſelf, which Providence did to the Prod Son, who entertained no Thoughts of retur

his Father, and his Duty, till Famine and ant had reduced him to feed upon Huſks with ine.

3. *Thirdly*, Affliction is a moſt admirable Medi- e for healing our Spiritual Diſeaſes, and reſto- g thoſe to Health, whom gentler Applications uld have no effectual Operation upon. This ens our Eyes, and works off thoſe Scales of itual Blindneſs contracted by long Eaſe and nterrupted Proſperity. Thus the Scripture takes otice that *the Rod and Reproof give Wiſdom*: And Prov. xxix. niſhes us with many Examples to this Purpoſe. is a moſt remarkable Paſſage concerning *Jo-* 's Brethren; who ſeem to have made no Re- tion upon their Barbarity to him for many rs together, till Famine and their rough Treat- nt in *Egypt* awaken'd them into Remorſe; and n this Occaſion they preſently fall to accuſing mſelves, and acknowledging the Juſtice of Pro- ence in avenging this unnatural Offence at the tance of many Years. Then *they ſaid one to ano-* Gen. xlii. *, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in* 21. *we ſaw the Anguiſh of his Soul, when he beſought and we would not hear; therefore is this Diſtreſs upon us.* And as Tribulation enlightens us, brings us to a Sight of our Faults; ſo is it a t Help to the removing and curing them. s Rod is like that which *Moſes* ſmote the Rock ; it ſoftens our ſtony Hearts, and makes the rs of Repentance guſh out in great Abundance. ce we find it compared to a File, that ſcours he Ruſt of the Soul; to a ſharp Remedy, that Job xxiii. nſes Wounds from Corruption; to Fire, that 10. ges the Gold from its Droſs: For ſuch in Ef- Prov. xx. 20. are Pride and Vainglory, Anger and Sloth, Iſai. i. 25. minacy and Luxury, and a thouſand more, Jer. ix. 7. h Proſperity contracts, but the Furnace of Af- Zech. xiii. ons thoroughly purges away. 9.

4. As Tribulation is a very excellent Remedy take away the Guilt and Malignity of Sins past, it is likewise an admirable Preservative against co tracting the like Guilt in Time to come. It mak Men sensible whom they have offended, how da gerous it is to provoke the Anger of God, how fe ful a Thing to fall into his Hands. And con quently, it makes them watchful and wary in th Behaviour, and careful of every Step they ta

Psal. cxix. This *David* confirms by his own Experience, *I good for me to have been afflicted, that I might le thy Statutes. Before I was troubled I went wrong, now have I kept thy Law.*

5. And this leads us to another very kind R son, which moves Almighty God to deal after Manner with his chosen and very dear Childr that so by chastising their Sins in this Life, drawing them to Amendment by his Severity the Warning taken upon it, they may escape infinitely more dreadful Punishments of anc State. This is expressly the Account render'd St. *Paul* of some temporal Afflictions, which

1 Cor. xi. 32. upon the Church of *Corinth*; *When we are jud we are chastened of the Lord, that we should n condemned with the World.*

6. A sixth Motive to this Course is, that Go Affliction may try his Servants, and bring Sincerity to the Proof; that so themselves others may be made sensible, out of what Prin they serve God, and how faithful, or how fi

Gen. xxii. their Virtue is. This was directly the Ca *Abraham*, to whom God gave that harsh Comm of sacrificing his Son, as a Test of his Faith; to see whether any thing, though never so d would stand in Competition with his Love and bedience to God. The same Account *Moses* of the long sojourning of the *Israelites*, before

Deut. viii. 2. were admitted to the Land of Promise. *The thy God led thee these forty Years in the Wilder*

humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was thy Heart, whether thou wouldſt keep his Command-ments or no. And again, with regard to his permitting the Seducements of falſe Prophets, *The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul.* Deut. xiii. 3.

And in like manner, God is ſaid *to have left Hezekiah* for a Seaſon *to try him, that he might know all that was in his Heart.* 1 Chron. xxxii. 31.

Thus *David, Thou, O God, haſt proved us, thou haſt tried us, as Silver is tried: Thou broughtſt us into the Snare, and laidſt Trouble upon our Loins.* Pſal. xlvi. 10.

And how well he was contented with this ſort of Proof, appears from his praying in another Place, that God would *examine and prove him, ſearch out his Reins and his Heart*, to ſee whether he were ſtaunch and ſound at the Bottom, and would ſtick to him in Adverſity or not. This was one great End of Job's Affliction, and is indeed that which makes Pſal. xxiv. 2.

wonderful Diſcoveries; there being (as our Lord obſerves in the Parable of the Sower) many a ſpecious Virtue, that carries a good Face, and yet in Time of Temptation falls away. Luke viii. 7.

7. A Seventh Reaſon for afflicting Virtuous and Holy Men is, to ſhew them their abſolute Dependence upon God, and drive them to ſeek Comfort and Succour from him, where alone they can be had. And this is a very uſual and a very natural Effect of Trouble, *in their Affliction they will ſeek me early*, ſays he by his Prophet. And ſo *David*, in great Hoſ. v. 15.

Charity, prays for his Enemies, *Make their Faces aſhamed, O Lord, that they may ſeek thy Name.* Nor Pſ. lxxxiii. 1.

can there be a ſhrewder Sign of Mens being utterly loſt, and given up to a Reprobate Senſe, than their not being drawn with theſe Cords of Affliction: Of which we find lamentable Complaints in the Prophet *Jeremiah, In vain have I ſmitten your Children, they received no Correction.* And again, *Thou haſt ſtricken them, but they have not grieved; thou haſt conſumed them, but they have refuſed to receive Correction;* Jer. ii. 30. *ver.* 2, 5.

ction; they have made their Faces harder than a Ro they have refuſed to return; they have altogether bro the Yoke, and burſt the Bonds. Intimating that this v the laſt Experiment that could be made upon ther and if this made no Impreſſion, they muſt be giv over for impenetrable, incorrigible Wretches.

8. Another Account of God's *afflicting* his S vants may be the gaining an Opportunity of m viſibly exerting his Power and Goodneſs in th Deliverance. For, as among Men, a Noble M covets nothing more earneſtly, than ſome v eminent Occaſion of teſtifying the Kindneſs profeſſes to his Friend, and at once to evide both his Ability and Inclination to do him S vice; ſo God Almighty, who hath all Events in own Diſpoſal, and whoſe Goodneſs infinitely cels that of the moſt generous and affection Friend, orders Matters ſo, as to make the ſtreſſes of his Servants ſerviceable to the Exer of this beneficent Diſpoſition. Such were the ſtimonies he gave to the *Three Children* in the f Furnace; to *Daniel* in the Den of Lions: to *Jo* in the Dungeon, and to *Job* in the Extremity his Miſery. And therefore did *Chriſt* not only ſu the Ship in which he ſailed with his Diſcip to be overtaken with a Storm, but ſlept till it even covered with the Waves; that is, defer his Aſſiſtance till they were reduced to the very Gaſp. Thus again did he permit St. *Peter* to ſi when attempting to walk upon the Sea; That, more imminent the Danger was, the more conſp ous his Power and Goodneſs might be, which ſo ſonably, and yet ſo effectually reſcued them out o

Dan. iii. *and* vi. Gen. xxxix. Job xliii.

Mat. viii. *and* xiv.

Strong Impreſſions are not left upon our Hea except when ſome very ſenſible and great Cha is wrought in our Affairs; and our Joys for ſcapes always hold Proportion with the Fe and the Calamities we are delivered from. R to a Labourer is grateful, according as he wea

ary with toil; and a Calm Sea infinitely more easant after a Tempeſt: Hence our Saviour ſtains his Diſciples with a promiſe, that their *rrow ſhall be turned into Joy*; and *David* magni- John xvi. s the Comforts of God's Support by ſaying, that 23. is *was preſent with him in the Vale of the Shadow of eath*; and *I will be glad and rejoice in thy Mercy,* Pſal. xxiii. & xxx. 7. *r thou haſt conſidered my Trouble, and haſt known my ul in Adverſities.* It is therefore a Mercy to af- ct us, becauſe this adds to our Joy, and renders ur Senſe of God's Goodneſs and our own Satisfa- ion in the eſcape, much more delightful, than it uld poſſibly have been, if we had never ſmarted nd grieved at all.

It likewiſe diſpoſes us more to Thankfulneſs, nd to proclaim this Goodneſs of our Heavenly ather more eagerly, more publickly, after that Holy Man's Example: *I will ſing of thy Power, yea* Pſal. lix. *will ſing aloud of thy Mercy in the Morning, becauſe* 16, 17. *hou haſt been my Defence and Refuge in the Day of y Trouble. Unto thee, O my Strength, will I ſing! for od is my Defence, and the God of my Mercy.* Ac- ordingly we find, that moſt of thoſe noble and ffectionate Hymns of Praiſe were compoſed up- n occaſion of ſome eminent Deliverance: This uned the Harps of *Moſes*, and *Deborah*, and *Han- ah*, and *David*, and *Hezekiah*, and others, who ll mingle the tendereſt Remembrances of their aſt Afflictions, with the acknowledgement of their reſent Bleſſings. And, as God's Glory is thus ubliſhed by our Praiſes, ſo this is one of the great nds by which he deſigns the advancement of his Honou , and a Tribute required from us; *Call up-* Pſal. l. 15. *n me*, ſays he, *in the Day of Trouble, ſo will I hear hee, and thou ſhalt praiſe me*: And again in the ame Pſalm, *Whoſo offereth me Thanks and Praiſe,* ver. 23. *e it is that honoureth me.*

Farther yet: By Perſecution and Affliction, and he Experience of his Goodneſs under them, God deſigns

deſigns to confirm and embolden us in his Service That we may be encouraged to Conſtancy in o Obedience, and not be diſmayed or terrified in Dif culties; when we reflect, how powerful and pr ſent a Helper and Protector we have, in all th we call upon him for. And this Reaſon mov him ſometimes not only to inflict, but to length our Sufferings: It being natural for Time a Cuſtom to render Things that were very terrib at firſt, very ſupportable, and by degrees famili to us. Till this be done, our Troubles have not a ſwered their End, and therefore it is obſerv ble, that St. *Peter* does not pray for an immedia and ſpeedy Deliverance of the Perſons he wri to; but that God would give it when he had fi fitted them to receive it to their true Advantag

1 Peter v. 10. *The God of all Grace*, ſays he, *who hath called unto his eternal Glory by Chriſt Jeſus, after that have ſuffered a while, make you perfect, ſtabli ſtrengthen, ſettle you.*

And this indeed is the peculiar Excellence Affliction, that it contributes greatly to the E erciſe and Increaſe of all thoſe Virtues and G ces, wherein Chriſtian Perfection conſiſts. ſtrengthens our *Faith*, by awaking us into a Co ſideration of the wiſe Reaſons, why God perm theſe Hardſhips; and by preſenting to us the p cious Promiſes of his preſent Aſſiſtance, and o future Reward. It confirms our *Hope*, by the E perience of his Power and Goodneſs; and puts *D vid*'s Song into our Mouths, *God is our Refuge a*

Pſal. xlvi. *Strength, a very preſent Help in Trouble; Therefo will we not fear, though the Earth be moved, a though the Hills be carried into the midſt of the Sea,* & And, which is yet of more valuable Conſideratio it aſſures us that God will not forget our labo of Love, but that they who ſuffer with him ſha moſt certainly reign with him. Thus lifting above the World, and all that it can do to

wh

while fixing our Eyes upon Objects certain, though Diſtant and Eternal, it exerciſes and inflames our *Charity*, by reviving in us the Remembrance and the Love of *Chriſt*, while conforming us to his Example, and rendring us highly contented to ſuffer for his ſake, who condeſcended to endure infinitely more for Ours. It teaches us Prudence and Diſcretion in our Behaviour, Temperance and Moderation in our Paſſions, and Deſires, and moſt lawful Enjoyments: Fortitude in bearing and being inured to Difficulties: It promotes Repentance and Sorrow for Sin, by making us ſick of that bitter Root, whence all our Sufferings ſpring: It brings down our haughty Spirits, and inſpires Humility, and Meekneſs, and Patience: In a word, it reſembles us to the Captain of our Salvation, and ſets us in the Way he trod before us, whoſe Character was, *A Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*; and ſo makes us *Crucified Chriſtians*, the beſt Condition and moſt honourable Title, which a State of Mortality can aſpire to: mortified to the Vanities of the World and the Fleſh, but purified and exalted in our Spirits, and full of vigorous Virtue, eager Zeal, and ardent Devotion. Iſai. liii. 3

These are ſome of the Reaſons, why God thinks fit to afflict his deareſt Children, why he pronounces *a Bleſſing upon them that Mourn*; and ſuch as manifeſtly ſhew us, how infinitely the World is miſtaken, in looking upon temporal Sufferings as the greateſt Miſeries, and certain Marks of the Divine Diſpleaſure. O! how unthankfully do thoſe Men deal with God, who repine at their Happineſs, and undergo with Indignation and Murmuring theſe very Diſpenſations of his gracious Providence, which ought rather to be received, with Contentedneſs ſhall I ſay? nay, not only ſo, but even with Joy and Thankſgiving? But of this we ſhall, I hope, be more effectually convinced,

vinced, when I have ſpoken to the Third Branch of this Argument, to which this laſt Reaſon aſſign'd for God's afflicting Holy Men very naturally leads me.

SECT. IV.

What Grounds of Comfort good Men may have in their Troubles.

NOW here I find myſelf prevented, and that the former Section is in effect an Anticipation of this through every part of it. For if God ſend Afflictions upon Good Men, with ſuch kind Intentions, as by their preſent Sufferings to increaſe their future Glory, to keep them clear of being infected by the bewitching Corruptions of the World, to open the Eyes of their Underſtanding, to cure their paſt Diſeaſes, and to be an Antidote againſt contracting New; to prevent heavier Miſeries in the other World; to try and illuſtrate their Virtue; to bring them cloſer to himſelf in Love and Holy Truſt; to render his Mercy more conſpicuous, and their Joy more tranſporting, by a more eminent Deliverance; to miniſter Occaſions for the Exerciſe of all Chriſtian Graces, and to conform them to the Image of his own Son, and their deareſt Saviour; Who can be diſcontented at this, except ſuch, as are either ſo blind, or ſo preverſe, as to be Enemies to their own Happineſs? How many nauſeous Medicines, how many painful Applications, do we willingly ſubmit to for the preſervation of theſe vile Bodies, and the lengthening out a Life, ſcarce worth our keeping, were it not in order to a better? And ſhall we repine at unpalatable Remedies, for the healing of our Souls, and the ſecuring of a Bliſsful and Eternal Life? But eſpecially, ſhall we think much

much to travel to Heaven, in the ſame Path which our Lord hath beaten out for us; to bear in our Bodies thoſe Marks of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, which ſhew that we retain to him? The greateſt Subjects eſteem it an Honour to carry about thoſe Badges which diſtinguiſh them, as Officers in the Court and Family of their Prince: Our Privilege is greater, for we wear the very Robe and Crown of our Spiritual King; and are advanced to his Throne by the ſame Methods, by which himſelf aſcended it. And how ought we to accept, how ſhould we prize this Dignity?

But ſtill, there are ſome other Conſiderations behind, which may more than reconcile, may indeed make us in Love with theſe Diſpenſations to us. As *Firſt*, if we reflect, that none of theſe things happen to us by blind Chance or any fatal Neceſſity, but by the ſpecial Providence, and particular Diſpoſition of Almighty God. 'Twas thus our Lord confirmed himſelf in his own Reſolutions to ſuffer; with ſome Degree of Indignation rebuking the too forward Zeal of a Diſciple, attempting his Reſcue: *The Cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?* Now the ſame Hand that tempered that Cup for *Chriſt*, tempers ours too. He mixes it with the ſame Affection, and the ſame kind Intentions; the promoting our Good, and his own Glory. He adminiſters the bitter Potion with ſuch care, that whatever Danger it may ſeem to threaten, not one Hair of our Head ſhall periſh by it. Nay, he never fails to qualify us for the kindly Operation, and makes it a Teſtimony of his Faithfulneſs, *not to ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the Temptation alſo makes a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.* This indoubtedly is matter of mighty Conſolation, and that it will become us always to have a very thankful remembrance of.

Joh. xviii. 11.

1 Cor. x. 13.

2. Again,

2. Again, We ſhall do well to conſider, tha *Chriſt* being now inveſted with the Power of go verning the World, theſe Events are all ordere by one, whoſe Experience hath taught him wha it is to ſuffer: One, who hath born himſelf, and is intimately acquainted with the natural Infirmitie of Fleſh and Blood, and conſiders what our Con ſtitution can bear. For *in that he hath ſuffered him ſelf being tempted*, he cannot but be touched with feeling of our Weakneſs, and will not fail to ſu cour, and to proportion his Tryals to the Capacit of *them that are tempted.* As the Apoſtle excellen ly argues in the ſecond, fourth, and fifth Chapte of the *Hebrews.*

3. But no Reflection is more ſupporting tha this, that theſe very Sufferings are deſigned fo Proofs of his Affection. The Croſs which Me have naturally ſo ſtrong an averſion to, is a choi Treaſure, reſerved for his particular Friends Diſtributed, not equally and promiſcuouſly, but ſuch a Meaſure, as is correſpondent to the Kindne he hath for each of thoſe Perſons to whom it is im parted. Thus when St. *Paul* is called a *Cho Veſſel*, the Evidence of his being ſuch is expreſs in the next Words; For, *I will ſhew him how gre things he muſt ſuffer for my name's ſake.* And S *Peter* declares his Notion of this Matter, when ſays, *If you be reproached for the Name of Chri happy are ye, for the Spirit of Glory, and of God, re eth upon you.* Thus He and St. *John*, after the being ſcourged, *went away from the preſence of t Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy ſuffer Shame for his Name.* And St. *Paul*, after aſſurance, that *the Grace of God ſhould be made pe fect in his weakneſs*, begins his Song of Triump *Therefore I take pleaſure in reproaches, in neceſſities, perſecutions, in diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake; for when am weak, then am I ſtrong.* And accordingly he preſents it to the *Philippians*, as a particular Favou

Acts ix. 16.

1 Pet. iv. 14.

Acts v. 41.

2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

nd Privilege, *Unto you it is given in the behalf of* Phil. i. 29,
hriſt, not only to believe in him, but alſo to ſuffer for 30.
is ſake: Having the ſame conflict which ye ſaw in me,
nd now hear to be in me.

4. From hence then we are warranted to draw
his *Fourth* Inference for our Comfort, that, when
Tribulation is ſent upon us, and attended with
Grace to bear it patiently, This is a Token of
God's appointing us to Bliſs and Glory everlaſt-
ng with himſelf. As on the contrary, to go on in
nterrupted Proſperity, is a very ſuſpicious ſign
f God's having given over his kind Intentions to-
ard us. Thus much is not only inſinuated by
he Texts already alledged, but induſtriouſly ar-
ued in the *Twelfth* to the *Hebrews*. To the ſame
urpoſe our Lord himſelf, *Bleſſed are ye that weep* Luke vi.
ow, for ye ſhall laugh. But wo unto you that are
ich, for ye have received your conſolation. Wo unto
ou that are full, for ye ſhall hunger. Wo unto you
hat laugh now, for ye ſhall mourn and weep. And
hat anſwer of *Abraham* to the rich Man in Hell,
on, remember that thou in thy life-time receiveds Luke xvi.
y good things, and likewiſe Lazarus *evil things; but* 25.
ow he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Not that any of theſe Paſſages are ſo to be un-
erſtood, as if Wealth or Proſperity were in their
wn Nature the Cauſe of any Man's Damnation,
ut becauſe they are great Snares, and exceeding
pt to betray Men into dangerous and deſtructive
ourſes. And ſince every Man hath multitudes of
ins, which deſerve to be puniſhed, and ſome good
iſpoſitions, which God thinks fit to reward; it
better, if his holy Will be ſo, that our Puniſh-
ent ſhould be in this World, and our Reward in
e next; than that our Reward ſhould be here,
nd our Puniſhment hereafter. And ſince ſome
eaſure of each will fall to every Man's ſhare,
e not being afflicted is a fatal Symptom of evil
ings awaiting ſuch Perſons in the Life to come.

Thus,

Thus, as St. *Gregory* expreſſes it, the Oxen mark
ed out for ſlaughter are turned looſe into pleaſan
Paſtures, and range and feed at Pleaſure; bu
thoſe deſigned for uſe are kept up, and dail
brought under the Yoke.

5. A *Fifth* Conſolation is the extraordinary Fa
vour and Preſence of Almighty God with his di
Pſal. xci. ſtreſſed Servants, as himſelf ſays, *I am with him i
Trouble.* Inſtances whereof we have in *Joſeph* whi
a Priſoner, and yet more remarkably in the Thre
Dan. iii. Children; with whom *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaw a fourt
Perſon walking in the midſt of the Furnace, who
Form was like the Son of God. And coul
Mens Eyes be opened, like thoſe of *Eliſha*
Servant, they would ſee ſuch bright Guards
Heavenly Powers ſet round about them, as cou
not but fill their Hearts with Courage and Com
fort. But what the Eye cannot ſee, the Soul fee
Though we cannot diſcern thoſe Protectors, whi
pitch their Tents round about us, and undertak
our Defence, by the Orders of that Lord of Hoſt
who aſſigns them all their Stations; yet we ca
find the Effect, and have the aſſurance of God
Grace, in the midſt of our Tribulation. Hence
was, that St. *Paul declared himſelf ſtrong, when
was weak*, becauſe he found the Powers of Divi
Grace riſe in proportion to his Preſſures. An
this agrees exactly well with that Account given
himſelf in the ſame Epiſtle, *We are troubled*
2 Cor. iv. 8, &c. *every ſide, but not diſmayed; we are perplexed, b
not in deſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken; ca
down, but not deſtroyed.* And, what an Advantag
what a Support is this, to conſider, that in th
utmoſt Perils, nay even in Death itſelf, they have
Almighty Friend to ſtand by them, and carry the
through? For (as St. *Auguſtin* moſt truly obſerve
Ser. 88. de Temp. *God never forſakes any Man, who does not firſt fo
ſake Him.*

To all this we may add the Expectation of a
lorious Recompence, and the ſhortneſs of our pre-
nt Sufferings. Both which St. *Paul* hath put to-
ether, when he ſaid, *Our light Afflictions, which are* 2 Cor. iv. 17.
t for a Moment, work out for us a far more exceed-
g and eternal weight of Glory. And our Lord in Rev. xxii. 12.
e manner, *Behold I come quickly, and my Reward*
with me. He will haſten to our Relief, and to
t an End to our Troubles; And, when he does
me, he will not come empty-handed; If then the
oad be heavy, yet let us conſider, we have not
to carry it; And we are ſure to be nobly paid
our Pains; and therefore we ſhould ſtrain hard,
her than loſe ſuch large Wages for ſo little La-
ur. And what can we deſire more? Our Lord
mforts us under Affliction, he enables us to hold
out, he takes care of the main Chance for us, and
r refreſhing us with his gracious Preſence, he
preparing to wipe away all our Tears, and to
ace us in the perfect Tranquility of his Bleſſed
ngdom. Methinks we might even now be per-
ded; but if we be not yet, our own Experience
l one day make it evident beyond all Contra-
ion, that upon theſe, and ſeveral other accounts,
Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to Rom. viii. 18.
compared with that Glory, which ſhall be revealed
s.

SECT. V.

How Men ought to behave themſelves under Affliction.

THEY, who duly attend to the Three Conſi-
derations which went before, cannot be much
a loſs for Information in this Fourth. No-
g being more obvious than that every Man
bliged ſo to demean himſelf under Affliction,
ay beſt expreſs the Submiſſion of our Will to

that of God, and anſwer all thoſe excellent pu
poſes, which He deſigns our Suffering ſhould pr
duce in us. But however, as I have done in t
foregoing particulars, ſo will I in this, obſerve thr
or four Things, which pious and prudent Men a
viſe, and ſuch as all who are reduced to diſtreſ
Circumſtances will find it highly expedient to
member upon this Occaſion.

1. Now it muſt be acknowledged in the *Fi*
place, that we ſhould all aſpire after that Per
ction of a reſigned and heavenly Mind, intend
by our bleſſed Saviour, when he bids his Di
Luke vi. 23. ples, *Rejoice and be exceeding glad* of thoſe ve
Reproaches, and Perſecutions, and other bod
Sufferings, which the common Chriſtian finds it
hard a matter to digeſt. But if Nature and
regard for this World be ſtill ſo ſtrong; if Fl
and Blood be ſo heavy that we cannot ſoar t
high, at leaſt our Underſtandings ſhould not
debauched if our Wills be captivated. We ſho
inwardly and truly aſſent to the Reaſonable
James i. 2. of the Apoſtle's Precept, of *counting it juſt m*
ter of Joy, when we fall into divers Temptatio
and ſo reprove, and condemn, and lament the C
nality of our own Hearts, which cannot reach
that Excellence in Practice, which in Spec
tion and Judgment we cannot but allow and e
mend. But if we are not able to reaſon ourſe
into this Opinion neither, the leaſt we can po
bly ſuppoſe our Duty, and that, wherein t
that fail, are left utterly without excuſe, is to
ſeſs our Souls in Patience; to take what God
upon us without any impious Repinings at Pro
dence, or unbecoming Reflections upon the Ju
or Goodneſs of him whoſe Wiſdom diſpoſes
Events; to lie down under his Rod meekly and
cently, without which it is impoſſible theſe C
ſtiſements ſhould ever turn to good Account.
Heb. x. 26. (ſays the Apoſtle) *ye have need of Patience,*

er ye have done the Will of God ye might receive
Promiſe.

2. *Secondly*, We muſt do in our Diſtreſſes, as Diſciples did in Theirs, when the Storm grew ious, apply to *Chriſt* for Help. He is with us , but as then, ſo often ſince, *he is aſleep*, and refore we muſt continue calling, till we have aken'd him: So did the Holy *Pſalmiſt* hereto- e: *Up Lord, why ſleepeſt thou? Awake, and be not* Pſal. xliv. *ent from us for ever: Wherefore hideſt thou thy* 23, 24. *e, and forgetteſt our Miſery and Trouble?* This portunity, provided it proceed from a true Af- tion, and juſt Dependance upon his Care and lp, is exceedingly well-pleaſing to him. A moſt mirable Pattern whereof we have in that moſt thetical Addreſs of *Iſaiah: Look down, O Lord,* Iſa. lxiii. *m Heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy* 15, 16. *lineſs, and of thy Glory: Where is thy zeal, and ſtrength, the ſounding of thy Bowels, and of thy ercies toward us? Are they reſtrained? Doubt- thou art our Father, though* Abraham *be ignorant us, and* Iſrael *acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, our Father, our Redeemer, thy Name is from ever- ing.* Thus then we muſt flee to God for Suc- r; pour out our Hearts before him; ſhew him our Trouble; expoſtulate the Caſe with him ffectionate, earneſt, devout and continual Pray- Remembering always the Succeſs, which our iour declares ſhall attend our Perſeverance. d that, if Men, who are frequently vanquiſhed importunity, even when Friendſhip fails to ve them, will give themſelves ſome Trouble, er than ſend ſuch a Suitor away empty; God Luke xi. o can with Eaſe, and whoſe Kindneſs always poſes him to relieve us, will not fail to grant hoſe Mercies, which are for our Advantage, vided we perſiſt in aſking, and do not caſt away Confidence in his Goodneſs and Power.

But here we must take one thing to be su
along with us, which is, that *Christ* suffered t
Ship to be almost covered with Waves, before
would awake; Intimating thereby that the me
sure and the length of our Tryals must be left
his Discretion. We must not be provoked to I
patience, nor pronounce rashly upon his De
ings with us, nor distrust his Ability, or his
clination to help. It is not for us to enquire, w
God does This, or suffers That; or how long
will permit the Burthen to lie upon us. Kno
unto him are all his ways; and Wise and Graci
in every Dispensation of his Providence; and
often sends Tribulation in large Measures, a
gives *plenteousness of Tears to Drink*, that his Po
may be the more conspicious in our Relief, a
our Joy and Recompence great, in proport
to our Tryals; and that he may prove our In
grity and search us to the very Bottom. Mat
1 Kin. xix. were gone very far with *Elijah*, when he
into a Mountain, and was destitute of all Hum
Help, and desired not to live any longer: A
Psal. xxxi. 22. with *David*, when he gave all for lost, and co
plained that he was utterly *cast out of God's Sig*
2 Cor. i. 9. and with St. *Paul*, when he had *the Sentence of D*
in himself; but never so far with any, as with
own dear Son, when in the anguish of his S
he uttered that doleful Lamentation upon the Cr
Matthew xxvii. 46. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken*
And who can in Justice think himself hardly d
with, when he considers that God saw fit to rec
the innocent *Jesus*, the Son of his Love, to
sad Extremities?

3. From hence then we may infer a *Third* Du
which is, Magnanimity and Constancy under
Afflictions; grounded upon a strong impregn
Faith in God's Assistance under, and final De
rance out of them, in his own due time, how
Mat. viii. vere and terrible soever the Storm may be u

in the mean while, The Diſciples did not cry *We periſh*, till the Ship was in all Appearance dy to be ſwallowed up; and yet *Chriſt* upbraids m for want of Faith. St. *Peter* did not expreſs Fear, till he was juſt ſinking, and even then Anſwer is, *O thou of little Faith, wherefore didſt doubt?* God can never be at a Loſs, but hath ny wonderful Methods in reſerve, unknown to for our Comfort and Deliverance. Matth. viii. 25. Mat. xiv. 31.

. In Confidence of theſe, St. *Paul* pronounces nſelf able to *do all Things, through Chriſt that ngthened him*; and *David* makes thoſe noble clarations, *I will not be afraid for ten thouſands of People that have ſet themſelves againſt me round t*; and *though I walk in the midſt of the Shadow Death, yet will I not be afraid*; *God is on my ſide, ill not fear what Fleſh can do unto me.* Theſe are Profeſſions of a Man, who had drunk deep of lictions, and ſpoke from his own Experience: d the Affection of Mind expreſs'd in them, is t *Chriſt* hath expreſsly enjoined. *I ſay unto you, Friends, Be not afraid of them which kill the Body, after that have no more that they can do.* Nay *Peter* goeth higher yet, and forbids us ſo much *be troubled*, or driven to any manner of Con- n, when we are called to ſuffer for God, and a d Cauſe. The Rewards promiſed to the Saints confined to them that conquer, and are faithful; the *Fearful* and *Unbelieving* are appointed r Portion *in the Lake which burneth with Fire Brimſtone.* Phil. iv. 13. Pſal iii. 6. xxiii. 4. lvii. 4. Luke xii. 4. 1 Pet. iii. 14. Rev. ii. & xxi. 8.

. From hence there muſt, and naturally will, ceed another Virtue, abſolutely neceſſary in Day of Trial; a firm Reſolution, I mean, to ntain our Ground, and go through any ſort Oppoſition or Contradiction whatſoever, which ſhall have Occaſion to encounter: Whether it rom the flattering Allurements, which would igle us into Sin, or the Threatnings and Cruel-

ties which would affright, and drive us away fro
Pſalm xxxvii. 3, 5. our Duty. To this Purpoſe are thoſe Exhortatio
in Scripture: *Truſt in the Lord and be doing go*
1 Cor. xvi. 13. *commit thy Way unto the Lord, and hold thee faſt*
him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs. Stand faſt in
Faith, quit ye like Men, be ſtrong; lift up the Ha
Heb. xii. 12, 13. *which hang down, and the feeble Knees; and m*
ſtreight Paths for your Feet, leſt that which is lame
turned out of the Way.

Of this Reſolution we have ſeveral notable
ſtances in the Old and New Teſtament. Such
that Anſwer of the three Children to the Menace
an angry Tyrant, who would have compelled th
Dan. iii. 16, 17, 18. to Idolatry: *O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not car*
to anſwer thee in this Matter. If it be ſo, our
whom we ſerve is able to deliver us from the burn
fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy Hand
King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King,
we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip thy golden Im
which thou haſt ſet up. Such that of *Daniel*, w
notwithſtanding an irreverſible Decree had pa
that whoſoever ſhould aſk any Petition of Go
Man for thirty Days, ſave only of the King
Dan. vi. 12. *Perſia*, ſhould be caſt into the Den of Lions:
that this Decree was by a particular Malice leve
at him, yet would not diſcontinue his uſual
Devotions to the God of *Iſrael*. Such that of St. P
and St. *John*, and the other Apoſtles, who
withſtanding the Injunctions and Threatnings o
Jewiſh Sanhedrim, and the Scourgings and Impri
ment already inflicted upon them, reply'd in their
Acts v. 29. Vindication, *We ought to obey God rather than M*
Such that of St. *Paul* to the Brethren, who w
have diſſuaded him from going into *Judea*, for
Acts xxi. 13. better Security of his Perſon: *What mean ye to w*
and to break my Heart? for I am ready, not
bound only, but alſo to die at Jeruſalem, *for the N*
of the Lord Jeſus. And in the Cloſe of his Eigh
the *Romans*, he expreſſes the Firmneſs of his M

Terms as high as Words can poſſibly carry it; at *neither tribulation, nor diſtreſs, nor hunger, nor* Rom. viii. *kedneſs, nor peril, nor ſword, nor principalities, nor* 35, &c. *wers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor life, r death, nor height, nor depth, nor any other crea- re ſhould be able to draw him off from the love of God.* ich in a word is that Gallantry of Soul, of which e Apoſtle produces ſo many glorious Inſtances in e Eleventh to the *Hebrews*. Which leads me to ſwer an Enquiry, not improper nor unlikely to made upon this Occaſion, and that is, by what eans a Man may hope to attain to this Steadineſs d immovable Reſolution of Mind, in the Per- mance of his Duty, though at the Expence of y Difficulties that may attack him in it.

Now this cannot better be done, than by fre- ently repreſenting to our Thoughts, *Firſt*, the eſtimable Rewards prepared for a Recompence our Fidelity; then the endleſs and unconceiv- le Miſeries, which all, who draw back, and l away in time of Trial render themſelves ob- xious to; and *laſtly*, to convince ourſelves, that e Thing, how difficult ſoever it may appear, is really not impracticable; to obſerve the Exam- es of others, who have done and endured the me Things before us, if not much greater than od puts upon us. And of theſe Patterns none ſo likely to enflame our Zeal, and provoke our itation as that of *Chriſt* himſelf; whoſe Sufferings re not like ours, a Chaſtiſement for any n of his own, or impoſed by a Power irreſiſtible d ſuperior to his own; but purely voluntary, d choſen out of mere Love and Tenderneſs for r Good. How profuſe are the Men of this orld, in their Boaſts of Wounds received, and tigues ſuſtained, in the Service of their Prince; ough he never expoſed himſelf at all for their fety? But, if that Prince lead them on in Per- n, if he do not only hazard himſelf, but actually

ſuffer in the Action, what Soldier, who hath t
leaſt Spark of Honour, does not ſtand by him, a
follow him into the very hotteſt of his Servic
Now this is our Caſe; the Captain of our Salvat
hath been wounded and bruiſed, and infinitely m
afflicted for us, than we can be for him; and ſh
we be ſuch deſpicable Wretches, to ſhrink and
off from him, when he calls us into the Field?

But if this be thought a Model too perfect
frame ourſelves upon, let us at leaſt animate o
ſelves by a Reflection upon the noble Explo
which our Brethren, in all Points like us, of
ſame Paſſions and Frailties, have done; and wh
they, through ſo much Tribulation, have ent
into the Kingdom of God, let it not ſeem hard
a little of it be laid in our Way thither too. St. P
gives this Deſcription of his own and the ot
Apoſtles Condition, when they firſt planted
1 Cor. iv. Goſpel, that they *were Fools*, and *weak*, and
ſpiſed for Chriſt's ſake, that they endured H
ger, and *Thirſt*, and *Nakedneſs*, and *Buffeting*; t
they had no ſettled Habitation, and maintai
themſelves by their *own Labour*; that while t
were reviled, they *bleſſed*: when they were
ſecuted, they took it; when they were *defam*
they returned *Calumny* with Entreaties; that t
were made as the *Filth of the World*, and
Off-ſcouring of all Things. That the Courſe t
2 Cor. vi. took to approve themſelves the *Miniſters of*
was by much Patience, by Afflictions, by Neceſſities
Diſtreſſes, by Stripes, by Impriſonments, by Tum
raiſed upon them, by Labours, by Watchings, by F
ings, by Pureneſs, by Knowledge, by Long-ſuffering,
Love unfeigned, &c. The Account given of him
in particular, in the Eleventh of that Epiſtle;
admirable Exhortation to this Purpoſe, ſo affec
nately urged in the Twelfth to the *Hebrews*;
Conſideration, how dear theſe Sufferers were
Chriſt, how virtuous and holy in themſelv
h

w useful to the World, how easy it had been for d to have prevented all their Sufferings, or to ve changed their Circumstances, and turn'd the earts of the most virulent Persecutors in a Mo- nt, if these *Afflictions* had not been more expe- nt, and contributed to his Honour, and their nefit, much more than Ease and Plenty, and osperity, and Favour with Men: In a word, whole New Testament especially, is one con- ued Doctrine of the Cross, explaining the Ends it, the Profit to be obtained by it, the mighty pports provided for those that are Oppressed h it, the Behaviour proper under it. So that no t of that Blessed Book can be diligently perused thout furnishing us with some one or more of the icular Instructions, whereof it hath been my deavour to give my Reader a due Apprehension this Chapter.

CHAP. IV. SECT. I.

Fourth and most dangerous Obstruction to Holy Resolution. The Love of the World.

THE former Obstructions, to the removal of which the Chapters last perused have, I hope, by the assistance of God's Grace posed my Reader, though they be very great, may they in this respect seem less formidable, cause they stand single and alone. But that ich we are now preparing to Encounter, is of a neral Influence, and indeed the common Root, Source of all the rest. For, whether Men w desperate in their Sins, or decline the Ser- e of God upon pretence of Difficulty, or fear Persecution, or aversion to Suffer what Good en are frequently called to; still the Love of the World

World is at the bottom of all, and the ſeveral Excuſes produced in their own Vindication are but ſo many Effects of this pernicious Cauſe. If the *Jews* refuſe to confeſs *Chriſt*, it is becauſe *they love the praiſe of Men more than the praiſe of God.* If *Demas* forſake St. *Paul*, when impriſoned for the Confeſſion and Propagation of the Truth, *the Love of this preſent World* is the cauſe of his Deſertion. This is an univerſal Evil, diffuſed every where, and lurking in many Hearts, where it leaſt appears. Nay, covering itſelf oftentimes by ſuch artificial Diſguiſes, as ſeem moſt directly oppoſite to, and yet iſſue directly from it.

John xii. 43.

2 Tim. iv. 10.

Of this we need no other Confirmation than that Divine Parable of the *Sower*; In which are repreſented Three ſorts of Men, upon whom the Word of God hath no effectual Influence, and as many Reaſons aſſigned, why it miſcarries in each of them reſpectively. The *Firſt* are compared to the *Way ſide:* upon which whatever Seed is ſcattered, the Fowls of the Air preſently pick it up, or the Feet of the Paſſengers tread it down, And this *Chriſt* Expounds of the Careleſs and Unthinking Hearers who never attend to the Buſineſs of Religion ſeriouſly, and ſuffer the Devil, or any wicked or trifling Suggeſtion, to juſtle all they had heard out of their Minds.

Mat. xiii. Mark iv. Luke viii.

The *Second* are reſembled to *Stony Ground* where the Seed flouriſhes a while, but for want of good Root, and depth of Soil, it dries up, and withers away in diſtreſs of Heat or Drought; and theſe are a kind of fickle People that intend, and begin well, ſet out with a very warm and eager Zeal, but upon any Diſcouragement, any trying *Affliction*, they fall from their own ſtedfaſtneſs and grow as cold in their Purſuits, as if they had never entertained any Thoughts of God and Religion at all.

The

The *Third* are said to be a Field, where the Corn comes up indeed, but is so over-power'd with Thorns, that is, the Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures, and deceitful Vanities of this World, that the good *Corn is perfectly choaked, and brings no Fruit to Perfection.* From whence we may very justly infer, that this is the most deplorable State, and most dangerous Obstruction of all the rest. Because here the Corn is supposed to have taken root, and to come up; and yet notwithstanding all these Promises of a plentiful Crop, the Increase is hindred. So that whersoever the Christian Faith, which answers to the good Seed, is planted, and received, and peaceably professed, and yet does not bring forth the Fruit agreeable to that Seed, a holy Conversation, and the Service of Almighty God (which alas! is the Case of most Countries which call themselves Christian at this Day) there the main Hindrance, which keeps back such a blessed Increase, is the Love of and Concern for this present World.

The Importance of this Parable is abundantly intimated to us by that very solemn bespeaking Mens Attention to it, *He that hath Ears to hear let him hear*; by that significant Preface to the Exposition of it, *To you it is given to understand the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*; *but to others it is not given*; that *seeing they may see, and not perceive*, &c. thus imputing the Disciples Skill in the mystical and most concerning Truths of the Gospel, to be in some good measure due to their being let into the true Meaning of this Parable. And therefore *Christ* magnifies their Advantage above that of common Men; *but blessed are your Eyes, for they see*; *and your Ears, for they hear.* After all which pompous *Apparatus*, follows, *Hear ye therefore* (for this is a Privilege by which you are distinguished) *the Parable of the Sower.* Since then all that is necessary or proper to be said upon the Subject now before us is comprehended in this Parable, I shall keep close

cloſe to that only, and enforce what I would recommend, for the taking away the Hindrances of a holy Life, growing from the Love of the World, by theſe following Particulars.

Firſt, In regard our Lord, with the Cares and Pleaſures of the World, mentions the *Deceitfulneſs* of Riches, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the Vanity of all temporal Enjoyments and Advantages, how little they are worth in themſelves, how unworthy to divert us from the Purſuit of heavenly Treaſures; and then how wretchedly they delude us, and fall ſhort of what they pretend to; and what we are drawn in to eſteem them for.

Secondly, In regard our Lord calls theſe Cares *Thorns*, I ſhall examine how they come to deſerve this Title, notwithſtanding the ſeeming Satisfactions which attend them.

Thirdly, I ſhall enquire into that Quality by which they are ſaid to *choak* the Word, and make the Man unfruitful. And,

Laſtly, I ſhall give Directions for uſing the World ſo, as not only to prevent theſe Miſchiefs, but to make it and its Advantages turn to our mighty Comfort here, and more glorious Reward hereafter.

SECT. II.

Of the Vanity and Deceitfulneſs of the World.

NEver was any Point proved by a more competent Evidence than this. It is not left to reſt upon philoſophical Arguments, drawn from the Nature of the Thing, or ſuch Colours of Probability as human Art and Wiſdom may put upon it; but upon the Teſtimony of one, who had greater Opportunities of knowing the utmoſt theſe Advantages

ages here below can pretend to than ever any Man had. The Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* give us an Account almoſt incredible of the Proſperity and Grandeur of *Solomon*; that of *Eccleſiaſtes* informs us from himſelf, what Liberty, what Pains he took to indulge all theſe Enjoyments; and yet when the whole comes to be computed, the moſt conſummate Wiſdom, from its own Practice and dear bought Experience, ſums up the whole in this ſhort, but often repeated Sentence, *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* St. *John* in the New Teſtament hath taken particular Care to diſſuade Chriſtians from entangling themſelves in the Love and Affairs of the preſent World, from a Conſideration how very fleeting and uncertain all its Joys are; and deſcending to Particulars, he reduces the Subſtance of them all to three Heads; which he terms, *the Luſt of the Fleſh*, *the Luſt of the Eyes*, *and the Pride of Life.* Comprehending under the *Firſt*, all bodily and ſenſual Pleaſures; under the *Second*, all the Pomp and Gaiety of Riches; and under the *Third*, all that Honour, or Greatneſs, or Fame, which Ambition pretends to ſeek, and Pride values itſelf upon. Theſe three therefore, with the Dependencies upon them, I ſhall conſider in the preſent Argument. And firſt of all, that which ſeems to be of largeſt Extent, meant by thoſe Words of the Apoſtle, *the Pride of Life*, and capable of being branched out into the following Particulars.

Firſt, Vain-glory; by which I underſtand an inordinate deſire of being thought and ſpoken well of, eſteemed, applauded, and praiſed by Men. I call it an inordinate Deſire, becauſe when confined within due Meaſure, and regulated by proper Objects and Means, there is a Deſire of this kind ſo far from being blameable, that it is not only lawful, but highly neceſſary, uſeful, and commendable. But when this is propoſed as a Man's chief End,

tho'

tho' there is ſcarce any more common, yet is it cer-
tain there cannot be a greater and more exquiſit
Folly. For what in truth is this, but chaſing
Feather flying up and down in the Air, and toſſe
to and fro by the Blaſt of every Man's Breath
wearying one's ſelf in a thing hard to be gotten
and of little or no Value when we have got it
For what real Value can there be in a thing ſo mu
table as that muſt needs be, which depends upo
the Inconſtancy and Capriciouſneſs of Mens Hu
mours; that pulls down one, and ſets up another
without any Merit or Reaſon; that makes a Ma
great and little, or nothing at all, good or bad,
a Moment, and at pleaſure?

Of this the World never had, or could have
pregnant an Inſtance, as our bleſſed Saviour, wh
was ſo far from giving juſt Offence, that he deſe
ved the Love and Admiration of all Mankind
and yet never were People more divided, nev
were the ſame Perſons more ſuddenly, more una
countably changed, than in their Opinions of an
Deportment to him. Some ſaid he was a *Samar-*
tan, and had a Devil, why ſhould they hear him
Others, that he was a *great Prophet, and ſpoke*
never Man ſpoke. Some were convinc'd that *he we*
a Teacher come from God, becauſe no Man could
the Miracles that he did, except God were with hi
Others again were no leſs peremptory, that he cou
not poſſibly *be of God, becauſe he wrought Miracl*
on the Sabbath-day. The Multitudes, on the tent
Day of the Month, conducted him to the holy Ci
with all the Ceremonies of Reſpect and Shouts
Triumph; and on the fourteenth of the ſame Mont
thoſe very Multitudes were inſtant with loud Voic
to have him crucified, and preferred a Robber an
a Murderer before their late adored *Son of Davi*
and their King coming in the Name of the Lord.

John viii. 48.
John vii. 46.
Joh. iii. 2.
John ix. 16.
Matt. xxi.
Chap. xxvii.

If then this innocent, this holy Perſon, this Preacher and Pattern of Righteouſneſs, this Worker of Miracles, was no better dealt with, what Security, what Confidence can any of us, infinitely inferior to him in Deſert, and blemiſhed with Failings and Faults innumerable, have of better Treatment? Why ſhould we put the Streſs of all our Labours upon ſo wretched, ſo doubtful an Iſſue? Why ſhould we lay ourſelves at the Mercy of every ſpiteful Detractor or falſe Flatterer? Have we no ſurer a Game to play than this? Yes, certainly; St. *Paul eſteemed it a ſmall thing to be judged of Man's Judgment.* And ſo ought we; provided the Maſter of the Race and the Giver of the Prize approve us, it is of no great conſequence whether the Standers-by be pleaſed or not. To accommodate ourſelves to their Liking, is to grind with every Wind. And how wretched a Thing is he that drudges, and toils, and ſlaves himſelf upon every Puff of Breath, but is immediately damped and loſt as ſoon as this Blaſt of Praiſe ſlackens upon him. 1 Cor. iv. 3.

The Scripture hath obſerved very juſtly, that *As the Fining-pot for Silver, and the Furnace for Gold, ſo is a Man to his Praiſe.* This tries him throughly, and ſoon diſcovers whether his Virtue be true Standard, or of a baſe Alloy. For as Metal, if it be good, is not hurt, but purified by the Fire; but if bad, turns into Droſs and Fume; ſo is a good or a bad Man affected with Commendations. How many do we ſee puffed up, and even tranſported beyond all ſober Senſe, by a general Applauſe; and as dejected and deſpicably melancholy again by Contempt, and a common Cry going againſt them? How many are ſupported in their Sins, and tempted to value themſelves for their Wickedneſs, by Countenance, and Credit, and great Examples? How many groſs and nauſeous Flatterers do we hear and ſee kindly received? and yet they who Prov. xxvii. 21.

cannot

cannot but be ſenſible they are ſuch, have not th
Wiſdom or the Grace to pray with *David*, th
Pſal. cxli. 5. *theſe precious Balms*, theſe Words as ſmooth as Oi
may not break their Head? Is not this Vanity? Is
not the moſt refined Madneſs? Thoſe glorious B
ings above us, the bleſſed Angels, ſeek not the
own, but God's Honour only. And we poor grov
ling Worms of the Earth affect to be magnified
and neglect our Maker's Glory. The Elders
Rev. iv. the *Revelation* take off their Crowns, and caſt the
at the Feet of the Lamb; and we labour to tak
the Crown from his Head, and put it on o
own. So truly does the Pſalmiſt pronounce, *Ver*
Pſ. xxxix. 5. *every Man living is altogether Vanity.* And we n
ver confirm this Sentence againſt us more effect
ally, than by our moſt ſollicitous Purſuits aft
Reputation and Applauſe; eſpecially when thei
as too generally they do, obſtruct us in our Dut
For what more extravagant, more abſurd, than
neglect the Service of God for any thing the Wor
will ſay or think of us? What will it ſignify to
in the next Life how People cenſure or commen
us here? Allow this but one ſerious and impart
Thought, and then I will venture to appeal to t
own Conſcience, whether the World, and the Lo
of it, in this reſpect be not the very Abſtract
Vanity itſelf.

2. A *Second* Branch of Ambition, is the deſ
of worldly Honour and Greatneſs. Dignity a
Promotion is in the Sight of many a Jewel of hig
Price, a Purchaſe worth all the Toil and Dang
that can poſſibly be paid for it. But of how fa
Influence this is to Religion, we have many ſ
John v. 44. Examples upon Record to inform us. This w
the very Diſpoſition that hindred the Chief amo
the *Jews* from confeſſing and coming in
Chriſt; this check'd the good Intentions *Pil*
John xix. had of reſcuing *Jeſus* from the Malice of t
Jew

ews; and made the Conviction of his Innocence
oo weak a Match for the Danger of being thought
o Friend to *Cæsar*. This kept back *Agrippa* and
Festus from becoming Christians, though the first
f them confessed that St. *Paul*'s Doctrine had *almost* Acts xxvi.
rsuaded him to be one. But alas! these Men, 28.
d the many Millions who tread in their Steps,
not give themselves the Trouble of weighing
s darling Idol of their wicked Hearts in an equal
lance. For in good Truth it is but a painted
easure; acquired with great Trouble and Ha-
rd; preserved with infinite Anxiety and Diffi-
ty, and lost with an insupportable Grief and
morse. To wean ourselves from this Trifle,
need only recollect, how many have sought in
n what we desire; how many have had it, and
nd no Comfort in it; how many have climbed
he highest Pitch of it, and been tumbled down
in in an Instant; and how short these Mens
sfactions fell of their Cares, and Fears, and
rows. What is now become of all those
nces, those mighty Men, in all Posts and Pro-
ons, who once took such Joy in their own Ad-
ement? Do Men so much as talk, or think of
n? Are not all their Laurels long since wither-
and even their Names and Memories buried in
Graves? The Men, that durst not once have
ed them in the Face, now trample them bold-
der Foot, and sit in Judgment over all their
ns. So short an Enjoyment is Honour, to
who are most successful in their Endeavours
it.

t the very Method which is usually most pro-
s in aspiring after it, is another Evidence of
anity. He thought very pertinently, who
ared it to a Man's own Shadow, which, the
he runs after it, flees the faster from him, and
he runs away from it, follows him; in short,
is not to be caught but by falling down to

the Ground; and even then too, the Man th thinks he hath it, finds his Hands empty as b fore. Thus we ſee the Eager and Ambitious fr quently diſappointed, the Modeſt and Humb courted and advanced: And thus it is in ſucceedi Ages, as well with regard to Memory, as to p ſent Poſſeſſion. The Greatneſs of a Man's S leaves more laſting Impreſſions behind it, than t of his Fortune or Promotion: And, who are n ſo high in general Eſteem, as thoſe good hum

Phil. iii. 8. Men, which, with St. *Paul*, counted all *things dung, ſo they might win Chriſt?* For, what inc is that to be accounted of, which neither cont the Deſires of the Mind, nor aſſwages the Pains o Body, nor continues in the Poſſeſſor's Cuſto nor leaves any Advantage behind it, when it ſakes him; and conſequently, which is upon Accounts, altogether unworthy to ſtand in com tition with a Thing ſo exceeding Beneficial different from it in all reſpects, as that holy R lution which I am now endeavouring to diſpoſ Readers to.

3. A *Third* Vanity, under this Head of Amb or *Pride of Life*, is that of Deſcent or noble Which is indeed of ſome Conſideration, whe tended with Virtue, and the Fear of God without this to recommend it, it is an e Trifle, and not fit to be eſteemed either by or Man. Our true Pedigree is no where drawn than by holy *Job*. For be our F what it will, there is not any of us but may

Job xvii. 14. that Confeſſion: *I have ſaid to Corruption, th my Father, and to the Worm, thou art my M and my Siſter:* And, if any of us think it ourſelves to own this Kindred, the Tombs Anceſtors will teſtify againſt us. The beg of all true Nobility was Virtue; and th that which was our Predeceſſors Ornamen Reward, ought to be a Spur to thoſe who ſ

n. Their Names and Titles, without their
ferts, do but reproach their degenerate Poſteri-
and in no degree prevent their being utter Aliens
all that is valuable in the Family. What a
dneſs is it then, to go a begging to the Dead
Honour, to take up Urns, and Aſhes, and old
ords, for ſomewhat there, to cover our own
me with? The King's Coin does not change
Metal; and he that is refuſe or counterfeit in
ſelf, cannot be made *Sterling* by the Formality
a Stamp. The Methods taken by God have
ceeded upon Meaſures very different from this.
Prince and Saviour of the World was ſeldom
nguiſhed by any other Title, than the *Son of*
; and though he were Lord of all, yet he
s himſelf commonly a *Shepherd*, a *Servant*, and
like. His Anceſtor *David*, who was advanced
temporal Throne, was taken from the Sheep-
s, and the youngeſt of the Family: And the
tual Governors of his Church were choſen
of Shops, and Cuſtom-Booths, and Fiſher- 1 Cor. i.
s: The Mean appointed to confound the
hty, and the Simple to ſubdue the Wiſe, as
of them ſays. So inſignificant a Pre-eminence
is of Blood; ſo empty, where Virtue is not
it; but perfectly againſt all Senſe, that it
ld be a Pretence to detain Men from Virtue,
mpt Quality and Condition to look upon Re-
n and the Service of God, as a thing below its
and very beſt Regard.

Another Vanity contributing *to the Pride of*
is worldly Wiſdom, ſuch as the Scripture
us, is *Fooliſhneſs with God*. And, if it be no
, conſidered in itſelf, what is it when moving
Oppoſition to God, and the only true, that
ligious Wiſdom? It is a moſt amazing Thing
nſider, that we ſhould be made after God's
Image in the Faculty of reaſoning, and yet
the Judgments of the generality of Mankind

ſhould be ſo vaſtly different from his. Who wo
not imagine, that the ſhrewd and ſubtle, the
and the eloquent ſhould have been the prope
Perſons both to propagate, and to do moſt emi
Service in the Church of *Chriſt?* And yet it ſe
this Doctrine is of another Temper, and requ
1 Cor. iii. 18. other Sorts of Inſtruments. For as *not many*
ſo not many wiſe neither after the Fleſh are called.
if any Man ſeemeth to be wiſe in this World, let hi
come a fool, that he may be wiſe towards God,
St. *Paul.* Theſe two kinds of Wiſdom go
diſtant Principles, and purſue quite different E
And therefore the Wiſdom of this World is
and of no Account, except it be ſubject to the
dom of God. And they, who for any temp
Reſpects, though ſeemingly of ever ſo great
portance, ſhall condemn thoſe that deſpiſe
World, and abandon all for God's Service,
Wiſdom is the groſſeſt and moſt fatal Folly:
a Day will come, when they ſhall confeſs, a
ſadly ſenſible, that it is ſo. But ſtill this is
underſtood, not of all Wiſdom in general; b
that which contradicts, or hinders, the true
dom from above.

5. A *Fifth* Vanity reducible to this Head is
Prov. xxxi. 30. ty, of which the Wiſe-Man ſays, *Favour is*
ful, and Beauty is vain. This is a painted Se
charming and fair without, but full of deadl
ſon within. A very deſtructive Snare this
many have been ſeduced and undone by it.
hath imparted ſome Degrees of Lovelineſs
Creatures, thereby to draw us to the Love an
miration of the Creator, by theſe Rays or Sh
of his own eſſential Goodneſs. But, whe
Hearts ſtop ſhort, we gaze like Children
gilded Cover, without improving by the C
of the Book. For the true Uſe to be made
would be to think how lovely and adora
muſt needs be, who could impart ſuch exc

blood

attracting Charms, to Earth and Aſhes: And conſider, how exquiſite our Happineſs will be after, when we ſhall be admitted to enjoy his rious Preſence, of whoſe amiable Graces the leſt Creatures have but a very ſmall part communicated to them. Would we but exerciſe ourſes in theſe Reflections, our Hearts might be ented pure and unſpotted before God, full of te Delights, and pleaſed with an innocent Conplation of his Works. But, by reſting in the ard appearance of things, we come to be capted with a fair Face, let looſe the Reins to un- Thoughts, and kindle the polluted Fires of in our Breaſts.

ence do ſo many periſh daily with a deceitful n, whoſe Emptineſs it were moſt eaſy to diſco- For, let the moſt inviting Face but be touchith a little Blemiſh, and all its Power is immely loſt and gone. Two or three Fits of an deſtroy the beſt Complexion; and if the Soul rt from this Idol of a Body, in one half hour its ur vaniſhes; and within Two Days time, the paſſionate Lover can ſcarcely bear it above nd. But if none of theſe things happen, yet Age is ſtealing on, and this by inſenſible de- will make ſuch an Alteration, that ſcarce any lent could disfigure it more, than Nature itwill ſhortly do. And can any thing be more han that Beauty, which of its own accord grows Deformity? Can any thing be more abſurd, to be proud of this in ourſelves, or to endanur Souls for it in others? How wretchedly do miſ-ſpend their time, who employ Hours and , Care and Pains, and Art, to procure or rve this fleeting Shadow, as if their Happineſs ted in it? Nay to make it, as too many do, a ance to their Duty here, and an Inſtrument rnal Damnation hereafter?

6. The Laſt Vanity I ſhall mention under Head of *Pride*, is Gaiety of Apparel. This is groſſeſt of all the reſt, and yet as common as of them. For let us but obſerve the thing ſelf, and its ſcandalous Original. Had *A* never loſt his Innocence, we had never ſtood need, and moſt probably never known the of Cloaths at all. For theſe were firſt contri for a Cover to our Shame, and Relief aga our Infirmities; and Shame, and bodily Infir ties are both of them the unhappy effects of So that to value ourſelves upon This, is as Beggar ſhould boaſt of thoſe Rags, to which own Negligence and Profuſeneſs had reduced

1 Tim. vi. 8. St. *Paul*'s advice is, *If we have Food and Rain let us therewith be content.* St. *John Baptiſt* is

Matth. iii. ticularly taken notice of for the Auſterity

2 Kings i. Coarſeneſs of his Habit; and ſo is *Elijah*, whoſe Spirit and Power he came. The firſt

Gen. iii. ments we read of were made of Skins of Be ſuch probably as had been ſlain in Sacrifice. Bleſſed Lord mentions it, as one of the De

Matth. xi. cies of King's Courts to wear ſoft Cloathing,

Luke xvi. one of the Characters given of the Rich Gl is, his Purple and fine Linen. Not that all ſtinctions of this kind are to be condemned: as Decency and Cuſtom require, may be very nocent, when uſed with Humility and Mod But, to be curious and expenſive, and to ta Pride in thoſe things, is both ſinful and extre vain. And this is generally the Caſe. Men and rob all the Creatures that come within reach; they take their Wool, their Furrs, very Excrements, they dive into the Sands of Sea, and dig deep into the Bowels of the Ea and, when they have put on theſe, which they Ornaments, plundered and borrowed from the of Creatures, they then look big, and fancy all Comelineſs their own. They conceive high thou

of themſelves, and look for reſpect from others upon this Account; as if That which covers, or perfumes their Bodies, were ſome ſubſtantial Excellence, inherent in their Minds. Nay they carry the Matter ſo far, as often to make the preſerving, the putting on, or the want of theſe things, a pretence for neglecting God's ſervice; a vaſt expence of time; a diverſion from better employment; a corruption of the moſt valuable Virtues; and in ſhort, the bane of a holy Reſolution, and a truly Chriſtian Converſation. And thus much of the *firſt* of St. *John*'s general Heads, *The Pride of Life.*

2. The Second is termed, *The Luſt of the Eyes.* By which, as was ſaid before, I underſtand the Pomp and Pleaſure of Riches. Concerning This St. *Paul* commands *Timothy*, and in Him every Miniſter of the Goſpel, to *charge Them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God.* And the Reaſon why no confidence ought to be repoſed in them is, becauſe, as *Solomon* obſerves, *they cannot profit in the Day of wrath*, when God afflicts us in this World, or when he takes us out of it: And leaſt of all when we moſt want relief, in the Day of Death and Judgment. To which purpoſe it is, that the wicked are introduced lamenting their own Folly, when too late, in theſe words among others: *What hath pride profited us? Or what good have riches with our vaunting brought us? All theſe things are paſſed away like a ſhadow*, &c. And what need of any farther proof that theſe are Vanity than This, that when the Owner moſt wants help and comfort, they cannot furniſh him with either? The Life of ſuch a Man is paſſed over like a Sleep; in which he dreams, as it were, of Golden Mountains: Pleaſing Imaginations of his Wealth, and the Service this would do him in any exigencies, have entertained him for a while; but when Sickneſs, or Trouble, or the approach of Death and Judgment awaken him, he finds all

1 Tim. vi. 17.

Prov. xi. 4.

Wiſ. v. 1. 9.

this but a Dream in effect, and himſelf deſtitute o all Support in his extremity, and the bitterneſs o his Soul. Nay, St. *James* repreſents the matter ye a great deal worſe, and tells us, that very ofte they do not only not allay, but add to the Miſe
Jam. v. 1, &c. ries of the Poſſeſſors. *Go to now, ye rich Men* ſays he, *weep and howl for your Miſeries that ſha come upon you. Your Riches are corrupted, and you Garments moth-eaten. Your Gold and Silver is ca kered, and the ruſt of them ſhall be a Witneſs again you, and ſhall eat your fleſh as it were fire; ye ha heaped up Treaſure together for the laſt days.* All th and much more might be alledged out of Scrip ture; by which the Holy Ghoſt ſignifies the Da ger and Vanity of Plenty and Pomp, and the foll of thoſe Men who dote upon it ſo, as either to g Wealth diſhoneſtly, or to hoard it up niggardl or to ſquander it away idly and unprofitabl
Mark x. 24, 25. *How hard is it*, ſays our Saviour, *for them that tr in Riches, to enter into the Kingdom of God? It eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a needle, th for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* An
Luke vi. 24. again, *Wo unto you that are Rich, for ye have receiv your Conſolation.* To which we may add that of S
1 Tim. vi. 9. *Paul, They that will* (that make it their aim and b ſineſs to) *be rich fall into Temptation, and a Snar and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drow Men in deſtruction and perdition.*

Is it poſſible for words to expreſs more forc ble Arguments for the drawing Men off from t Love of Riches? Muſt not every Covetous Ma who reads theſe Texts, ſtand ſelf-condemn and reproached by his own Conſcience? Let Pe ple pretend what they pleaſe, of Families, a Dependances, and a Care neceſſary to be tak for providing theſe a comfortable ſubſiſtence: A This, and whatever elſe They can alledge, w never vindicate the inordinate Love of, and anx ous Concern for the World. Our Saviour do

ot only not admit, but he expoſes the Vanity of his Pretence. He aſks the Rich Man, who had filled his Barns, whoſe thoſe Fruits and Goods should be, which he had with ſo much ſolicitude provided and promiſed himſelf a long Enjoyment of? The reply of Wife and Children is cut out in the very firſt Word, *Thou Fool*; for Folly it was, and great Folly, to give himſelf up to the World, even upon that Conſideration. For, what comfort, think we, can it be to a Father in the torments of Hell, to reflect that his Family live plentifully for a little while upon Earth, by means of that Wealth, which is become an Inſtrument of making Him miſerable for ever? Will he not then wiſh, that his Soul had been more, and his Family leſs his Care; and what is Family then? Alas! a new Scene opens the Face of things, and the diſpoſitions of Mens Minds are quite changed: Our Relations ſhall not be to us, in the other World, what they are now: Partiality and Carnal Affections have no place there; but the only Object of Love and Hatred remaining will be Good and Evil. One Alms beſtowed for God's and Chriſt's Sake upon an Enemy, or a Stranger, will yield us more ſolid Comfort, than an over-grown Eſtate left to our Children, or a Family raiſed by our moſt painful Induſtry. Were this duly conſidered, Men would uſe the World, as not abuſing it; they would do good to themſelves, by doing good to others; even the Hungry and Naked Members of *Chriſt*, that want and are ready to periſh. They would, if not before, yet at leaſt in their laſt Hours, ſend ſome *Friends* before them *made of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when they fail, theſe may be a means of receiving them into everlaſting Habitations.* For, then only is the rich Man happy, when he hath the Grace to make a right uſe of his Riches; who, while the time of his Stewardſhip continues, manages them ſo prudently, as to

make

make them turn to true Account, by being laid ou to the Honour of God, the Benefit of others, an the Increaſe of his own everlaſting Reward. And ſ much for the ſecond Head.

3. The *Third* Head of Worldly Vanities, ſtyle by St. *John the Luſt of the Fleſh*, comprehends un der it all thoſe ſenſual Delights, whereby the Bod is chiefly gratified. Such as Feaſting, Merrimen *Rioting and Drunkenneſs*, *Chambring and Wantonneſ* Rom. xiii. 13. and ſuch other Entertainments and Diverſions, ver. 14. St. *Paul* denotes, by *making proviſion for the Fleſ to fulfill the Luſts thereof*. And, though many theſe be in their own Nature lawful, when confine to proper Seaſons and Meaſures, and limited b ſuch Rules, as health and convenience, and decenc preſcribe; yet are they not only vain, but extrem ly Dangerous in thoſe Exceſſes, which the Men this World uſually covet and indulge them i To theſe do the Miſeries denounced by our Lo belong, *Wo unto you that are full, for ye ſhall hunge* Luke vi. 25. *Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye ſhall mourn a weep*. And of the ſame ſort of Perſons, comp red with his own Diſciples, it is ſaid in anoth John xvi. 20. place, *Ye ſhall weep and lament, but the World ſh rejoice*. Thus making it as it were a Note of D ſtinction between Good and Bad Men, that t One ſhould paſs their Days with a large Mixture Sorrow, and the Other let themſelves looſe to J lity and preſent Delights.

And reaſon great there is for this Diſtinctio A Chriſtian's Life is a ſerious and thought Thing; he conſiders the mighty Importance the Work upon his Hands; he hath many afflicti Remembrances of his Sins and Failings; keeps a conſtant and awful Senſe of the Juſtice God upon his Spirits; he feels the Miſery and ſolate Condition of the Soul in this Vale of Mi ry, and Scene of Temptations; he pants and gro for a releaſe, and longs moſt earneſtly for t

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perfect Redemption, where not only Pains and Tears, but Sin, and Imperfection, and Danger ſhall be done away. And theſe Impreſſions, being vigorous and lively upon a good Man's Mind, in proportion to his Love and Zeal for God and Religion, preſerve it from flying out into Extravagance, and render him always ſober, and grave, and compoſed. And though this Man knows it both lawful and neceſſary, and therefore makes no ſcruple to recreate himſelf with innocent and moderate Diverſions; yet does he conſtantly bear in Mind, what Watchfulneſs and Carefulneſs becomes a Man, who is travelling through rough and ſlippery Ways, to his heavenly Country; and, that all who labour after Eternal Salvation, are directed *to work it out with fear and trembling*. Phil. ii. 12. Hence are thoſe Sayings of the Wiſe Man, *It is better to go to the Houſe of Mourning, than to go to the Houſe of Feaſting. Sorrow is better than Laughter, for by the ſadneſs of the Countenance the Heart is made better*; and in another Place, *Happy is the Man that feareth always*. Eccleſ. vii. 2, 3. Prov. xxviii. 14.

And ought we not to fear, and look before us, to think what Account we ſhall be able to give of our Talents, our Time, our Wealth, our other Advantages and Opportunities of doing Good? Ought we not to conſider, and contrive, how we may beſt withſtand our Spiritual Enemies, mortify our Luſts, obſerve God's Commandments, and, by our prudent Conduct, make our Light to ſhine before Men? Sure, if theſe Matters were but attended to, but eſpecially if any of us would but reflect what ſtate our Soul is in, and how we could ſtand before the Great God in Judgment, ſhould a ſudden Death hurry us thither immediately, This would cut off a World of idle and impertinent Diverſion; and we ſhould hear no more of thoſe Complaints, ſo unbecoming the Mouths of Chriſtians, that Time lies upon their Hands,

Hands, and that Conſideration is a Burden. This would keep Men from letting themſelves quite looſe to Vanity and ſenſual Mirth, which above all Things unhinges and breaks the Tone of the Mind, ſcatters our Thoughts, and indiſpoſes us for any thing that is Serious and Good, that becomes a Man to do, and requires Application in order to be done. It is very obſervable in our Pattern, the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, that though he diſdained not to carry our Sorrows, and to ſhed our Tears, yet we never find him condeſcending to partake of our Laughter, nor our Jollities. The two Extremes of our Life are in God's Hand, and he hath ſo ordered the Matter, that Pain and Sorrow attend our Entrance into, and our Paſſage out of the World; But the middle Part, which is left in our own Hands, we diſpoſe of to Folly and dangerous Delights; and inſtead of employing the little ſpace we have to the beſt Purpoſes, we labour how to keep it void of Buſineſs, and to drive away even that moſt neceſſary Thought, whence we came, and whither we are going.

O! Were we but the Wiſe Travellers, which we ought to be, our Pleaſure would not be ranting and revelling upon the Road, but that of going the right Way, and thinking on the Place whither we are bound. Nor ſhould we, in our Inn, be ſollicitous to feed high, and indulge our Appetites, but chuſe what is moſt proper to ſuſtain us in our Journey, and remember that any Dainties we call for will be ſure to enflame the Reckoning. And therefore the beſt way is ſo to Eat and Drink over-Night, as we ſhall be content to pay in the Morning, when we go away. For a Reckoning we muſt come to; and how jocund ſoever we may be now, yet when Death and Judgment call upon us, aſſuredly our ſenſual Mirth will be Heavineſs, and our Joy Mourning. Let us therefore conſider, that we indulge the Pleaſures

ſures of Sin, at our own vaſt Expence; that all Neglects of God and our Duty, all our wanton and intemperate, our profane and diſſolute Converſation, will be charged upon us; and let us fear, leſt that Sentence againſt *Babylon* be ours; *How much ſhe hath glorified herſelf, and lived deliciouſly, ſo much Torment and Sorrow give her.* Rev. xviii. 7.

I hope, by this time, every one of my Readers is convinced of the Vanity of the World, and of all the Satisfactions it can pretend to, ſo far as concerns the Worthleſneſs of theſe Things in themſelves: I ſhall now proceed to ſpeak briefly of that, which I propoſed as the ſecond Part of this Argument, their deceiving us, and falling ſhort of what we expect in, and eſteem them for. We are all dealt with in this Caſe, as *Jacob* was by *Laban*, who, after he had ſerved him ſeven Years for *Rachel*, was at laſt put off with *Leah*. For, how many falſe Promiſes does the World make daily, and how little do we receive of that, which it encouraged us to depend upon? One Man flatters himſelf with the Thoughts of ſound Health, and long Life, and behold he is cut off in the Midſt of his Days. Another with Promotion and a plentiful Fortune, and he ſinks into Contempt and Extremity of Want. Run over your Acquaintance, look into all Places, and all Conditions, and you ſhall find City and Country, Princes and private Perſons, full of Lamentations and Complaints. Some, for the Loſs of what they had; Others, for the miſſing what they were in Proſpect of; a third Sort, for not finding their expected Satisfaction in what they have attained; all, for being in ſome ſort deluded and defeated. Infinite indeed are the Cheats of this Diſſembling World. It is goodly and beautiful, and gay to the Eye; but when we come to prove and handle it, it hath no Subſtance or Solidity at all. It is, as the *Prophet* ſays, *Deceitful upon the Weights,* Pſal. lxii. *and* 9.

and altogether lighter than Vanity itſelf. O miſerable World, ſays St. *Auguſtin*, whoſe Griefs are real, *but thy Delights counterfeit and empty; thy Sorrows and Sufferings are ſure, thy Pleaſures uncertain: Thy Pains are permanent, thy Comforts ſhort and tranſitory; thy Toils inſupportable, thy Rewards poor and deſpicable: Thou promiſeſt with all the Profuſeneſs of a Prince, but payeſt with all the Indigence of a Beggar. Thy Miſeries are pure and unmixt without any Abatement, thy Happineſs tempered and allayed with all Kinds of Miſery.*

To get a true Knowledge of the World, and ſee Things in their true Light, it is neceſſary to retire at ſome Diſtance, and take our View from thence. For while we are in the midſt of it, and engaged in its Affairs and Enjoyments, we walk in a Miſt, and are blind to our own Condition. Thus it firſt puts out our Eyes, and then leads us wrong. It corrupts our Diſtinctions between Good and Evil, and then lulls us aſleep with a profound but falſe Security. It binds us with Cords of Silk, and makes us content to be deceived and enſlaved. It falls in with the Inclinations of Senſe, and ruins us to our Heart's Deſire. It ſhews us the *Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of them*, and finds our greedy Ambition diſpoſed *to fall down and worſhip*. It ſhews us damaged Goods, and will not allow us to carry them to the Light. It hath *Ahab*'s four hundred falſe Prophets, which keep us from hearing the Counſel of one honeſt *Micaiah*, and ſtifle Reaſon and Conſcience, when they would tell us the Truth. It lays before us pleaſant Baits, but if we nibble at them, ſtrikes us with Death upon the Hook. It offers us, like *Babylon*, Golden Cups, but the Drink is mingled with deadly Poiſon. In a word, it is an alluring *Jael*, proffering us Shelter, but murdering us if we accept it; a flattering *Joab*, embracing us with one Arm, and ſtabbing us to the Heart with the other; a treacherou

herous *Judas*, that betrays us with a Kiſs. It orments them that love it, deceives them that ruſt it, treats them worſt that take moſt Pains to erve it, and damns them to all Eternity who give heir Hearts up to it. *How long* then, *ye Sons of Men, how long will ye turn your Glory into Shame? ow long will ye love Vanity and ſeek after a Lie?* For uch in Truth is the World; Falſhood, and Fraud, nd treacherous Malice, lie at the Bottom of all its air Pretences.

SECT. III.

The World compared to Thorns, and why.

I Proceed now in the *Second* Place, to enquire into the Fitneſs of that Compariſon made of the World, wherein our Saviour *Chriſt* reſembles it to *Thorns*. An Enquiry, the more neceſſary, becauſe ſo many ſeem to take marvellous Satisfaction in its Riches and Pleaſures. And therefore it needs all the Authority of our Lord himſelf, to make this received for a juſt Account of the World. And yet, if we will take a cloſe and impartial View of the Matter, the reſtleſs pricking Cares which gall the Soul, and the many Temptations to Sin, which wound it even to death, do abundantly juſtify this Title. Hence it is that *Solomon* does not call other temporal Enjoyments *Vanity*, but *Vexation of Spirit* too; intimating, that where theſe have once entred and taken Poſſeſſion, there is no more Place for true Quiet and Peace of Mind; but warring Deſires, tumultuous Thoughts, afflicting Fears, Anguiſh, and Anxiety, and incurable Diſcontent. How many rich Men feel this to be true? How many Ambitious groan under their cruel Bondage, and yet have not the Heart to break this Yoke of Tyranny? And certainly,

tainly, of all the Punishments inflicted by God upon sordid and worldly-minded Wretches, his Justice and Wisdom is most eminently seen in this, that he makes what they esteem their greatest Felicity, to prove their continual Torment. He hems them in on every Side with Cares, that rush upon them in the Morning, and assault their waking Thoughts; that haunt and dog them close at the Heels all Day, and embitter their promised Enjoyments; that pursue them to their Beds, and break their Sleep at Night. In a word, that fulfil the Sentence of *Isaiah*, express't in most significant Metaphors, when he says, *They hatch Cockatrice Eggs and weave the Spider's Web: He that eateth of their Eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a Viper. Their Webs shall not become Garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their Works. Their Works are Works of Iniquity, and the Act of Violence is in their Hands.*

Isa. lix. 5, 6.

Thus we see the Dangers, the Disappointments, the painful Travel, the pernicious Fruit, of these Men: which expose them to infinite and unprofitable Toil, and end at last in their own Guilt and Destruction. So that to this Case in particular may very fitly be applied that Description given by *Moses* of wicked Men in general; *Their Vine is of the Vine of* Sodom, *and of the Fields of* Gomorrah; *their Grapes are Grapes of Gall, their Clusters are bitter; their Wine is the Poison of Dragons, and the cruel Venom of Asps.* So dreadful and loathsome are the Figures made use of to represent the wicked Worldling's Condition to us; so bitter and dangerous what he falsly calls Pleasure, if once it get the Dominion over his Heart, and be not managed with the nicest Caution, and most steady Sobriety.

Deut. xxxii. 32, 33.

But, though the Sense of the Holy Ghost, delivered by these inspired Authors, be so amply declared in the Point before us, yet need we not

rest

ſt upon even the weightieſt and moſt ſacred Au-
orities for Proof, but may ſatisfy our ſelves be-
nd all Contradiction from our own Reaſon and
e Nature of the Thing. And among others
eſe following Particulars are a ſubſtantial Evi-
nce, that thus it always is, and cannot be other-
ſe, with the Men who are of that Diſpoſition, in-
nated by the Seed ſown among Thorns, in the
rable now under Conſideration.

1. *Firſt*, The ſhortneſs and uncertainty of all
ir Proſperity, and the many Accidents, which
ſe Advantages are liable to be taken from him
after one hath gotten them as he thinks, in
et Poſſeſſion. For, however defective the good
ings of this World may be in other Reſpects;
no doubt it would add much to their Value,
l be ſome excuſe for ſetting our Hearts upon
m, could they be conſtant and perpetual. But
s is a Privilege they are not capable of, and in-
te are the Hazards, that have them at their
rcy; it is much more than probable they may
wreſted out of your Hands by other means.
there is one thing infallibly certain, to ſepa-
, in a very little while, between them and
r Poſſeſſors; and the Proſpect of this una-
dable parting is a moſt cutting Conſideration;
the Son of *Sirach* hath very movingly ex-
s'd it; *O Death, how bitter is the Remembrance* Ecclus xii.
bee to a Man that liveth at reſt in his Poſſeſſions, 1.
the Man that hath nothing to vex him, and
Proſperity in all things! Were this Death at as
t a diſtance from us, as the longeſt Period
uman Nature would admit, yet even ſo the
m is but a ſhort one. But alas! This is very
from being the Caſe, and daily we obſerve it
rwiſe. How many have we ſeen advanced
and haſtily, and as quickly tumbled down
their Graves, before they have reaped any
t of their Labours? How many, revelling in

Joy, and all things to their Hearts content, wh
Happineſs one Week hath put an end to? H
frequent Examples of this Nature may we ha
heard and read, how many indeed may we ſee d
ly? What an Heart-breaking was it to *Alexan*
the Great, after all his Toils and Conqueſts, wh
his Soul was full of Joy and Pride, and expe
to ſit down quiet univerſal Monarch of the Wor
when he knew no other occaſion of Grief, than
ly that there were not more Worlds to enlarge
Glory and his Spoils, juſt in this juncture to
ſtruck with Death, when all things thus conſpi
to render Life more than deſirable? What a C
fuſion muſt it needs have been to all thoſe, w
like the Rich Man in the Goſpel, after great C
taken to beſtow their Treaſures, and promiſ
themſelves a moſt comfortable Enjoyment of m
Proviſion laid up for many Years, to hear that dre
ful Sentence of Death pronounced upon The
Thou Fool, this Night ſhall thy Soul be required of t
and whoſe then ſhall all theſe Things be, which t
haſt heaped together with ſo much anxiety,
hugged thy ſelf in, with ſuch a miſtaken delig
This, This is the miſerable Condition of m
eager and greedy Worldings, whoſe only Buſi
and Aim it is, to build ſtately Seats, to purc
great Eſtates, to gather vaſt Sums of ready Mo
to buy Titles and Places of Honour, to make p
erful Alliances, and ſtrengthen their Intereſt, a
theſe Things were never to have an end.
when at laſt they think of ſetting up their R
then, like Beaſts of Burden, they are turned
and all the Treaſure taken off from them, u
the load of which they have laboured and groan
and all the Effect of their Drudgery is, that
Bodies are waſted, and their Souls wretch
galled, with the carriage of that, which they
denied at laſt any Enjoyment of.

2. Another Thing, which juſtifies the comparing
en the Proſperity and Pleaſures of this Life to
orns, is that grievous Counter-balance of Sor-
w and Diſſatisfaction, which every earthly Ad-
ntage carries along with it. For never yet was
re any Comfort or Delight without its Allay;
ver any Man, who had the longeſt experience
it, that could ſay he was perfectly ſatisfied with
preſent Circumſtances. We have already ſeen
at variety of Fears and Cares the poſſeſſion of
ches is ever incumbred with: And how miſerable
lavery Honour and Advancement renders the
ndidates and the Attainers of it ſubject to. The
tifications of our fleſhly Appetite, even when in-
ent and lawful, are, as St. *Paul* ſays, attended
Tribulation; but if theſe be irregular and unal-
rable, then is it followed with ſad Remorſe, and
Thouſand bitter Conſequences. 1 Cor. vii. 3.

3. It were endleſs to attempt an exact account
all thoſe Calamities to which we are all expo-
in this State of Mortality. The Infirmities
Diſeaſes, the Misfortunes and Dangers, to
ch our Bodies are daily and hourly obnoxious:
infinite contending Paſſions of our Minds,
ch perpetually afflict and diſtract us with Grief,
Envy, with Anger and Hatred, with inor-
te Deſires, or ſenſual Love. The many ad-
e Accidents, that happen to our Eſtates, the
berleſs Miſchiefs and Diſquiets, that are
ght upon us from our Neighbours, by means
njuſt and unreaſonable Men. The Feuds and
ions, the Quarrels and Contentions that teaſe,
vex, and torment us; while one engages us in
bleſome and expenſive Suits, to defend our
e; Another brings us in danger of our Life;
hird deſtroys a Good Name, by falſe and
dalous Reports. Spight and Envy, Flattery
Fraud, Violence, and Revenge, Perjury and
rnation, Forgery and Falſe-witneſs, are e-

ver and anon laying Snares for our Ruin. Th
Days, the Hours we live are ſcarce ſo many,
the Miſeries and Vexations, the Contradictio
and Contentions we meet with in them. An
which is very remarkable, the Evil we endu
hath this Advantage above the Good we enjo
that any one Oppoſition or Defect quite ov
powers and deſtroys the Senſe of many Comfor
So that if all the other Satisfactions, of which
preſent State is capable, could be ſuppoſed to c
tre in one Man, and yet any one part of his Bo
any one Circumſtance in his Affairs be in diſord
this ſingle defect would take off from all his ot
Enjoyments. We ſee by one eminent Inſtance
Scripture, how very deep and painful an Imp
ſion a very Trifle will make upon a Man
Worldly Diſpoſition; For *Haman* in all his Gr
Eſther v. 11,12,13. deur and Pomp declares, that *neither the Glor
his Riches, nor the Multitude of his Children, nor
the Things wherein the King had promoted him,
his Advancement above the Princes and other Serv
of* Ahaſuerus, *nor his being the only Perſon admi
to* Eſther's *Banquet, availed him any Thing at all
long as he ſaw* Mordecai *the Jew ſitting at the K
Gate.*

4. Beſides all theſe Miſeries, we ſhall do
well to conſider one more great and formid
to a Good aud Wiſe Man, than all the reſt;
that is the Temptations and Snares, by wh
theſe Things ſeduce and entangle Men in Sin
Perdition; ſo that no Man is ſecure one Mom
but in a State of Danger, like his that walk
a dark Night upon a ſlippery Precipice, w
every Step he takes may be his Ruin. This Co
tion of Mankind is ſaid to be repreſented to a
ly Man of old, by a Viſion of the World
round about with Nets, and the Devils ſittin
every Corner, watching their Prey, and dri
People into them. And the Prophet *David* be

is deſcription of God's Judgments upon Wicked
len, by ſaying, that he ſhall *rain upon them Snares*; Pſal. xi. 6.
at is, ſhall ſuffer theſe to fall as thick about them,
Showers do from the Clouds. And thus indeed
is: For there is no Action, or Accident, ſo tri-
al, which to a Mind not rightly diſpoſed, does
t prove an Inſtrument of Death. Every alluring
bject he ſees, every looſe Diſcourſe he hears, e-
ry pleaſing Thought he cheriſhes; Youth and
ge, Friends and Enemies, Honour and Diſgrace,
ches and Poverty, Succeſs and Diſappointments,
mpany and Solitude; The common Refreſhments
d Conveniences of Life, Food and Raiment, all
aw the Man into Miſchief, who is not watchful
manage them rightly, and to prevent the ill Ef-
ts they are capable of producing; but gives his
ind up to Senſuality, and ſo takes part with the
emy againſt himſelf.

And yet, notwithſtanding Sin is the only Thing,
at can make People truly Miſerable; how eaſily
e they drawn into it, how greedily do they com-
t it, how prevailing, how univerſal is the Infe-
on? *Job* obſerves, that *Wicked Men drink Iniquity* Job xv.
e Water, not only without any Reluctance or 16.
ruple, but with the ſame Eagerneſs and Pleaſure,
a Man quenches his Thirſt. And if this ſurprize
a very little of our own Obſervation and Ex-
ience may ſerve to make that wonder ceaſe.
r if we walk the Streets, and take a view of the
alings in Trade; of the Proceedings in Courts
Judicature; of the Conſults in Aſſemblies of
te; what Frauds, what Falſhood, what Partia-
, what Piques, what Emulation ſeem to reign
ry where? How loudly does every Nation and
untrey, and Age in the World, and how have
y ever complained of Juſtice bought and ſold,
Truth wreſted and perverted, of Shame and
nour loſt; of innocent Perſons condemned, and
lty acquitted; of the Wicked advanced, and

the Virtuous oppreſſed? How many Robbers a
Defrauders flouriſh? How many Extortioners a
publick Cheats bear ſway? How many Murd
ers are reſpected and admired? How many v
and deſpicable Wretches are put in Authorit
Nay, which is worſe, how many Beaſts, and M
of no Principles, no Qualities of true Men, b
that Figure which the Brute within diſgraces, ha
been in all Ages advanced to govern their Bette
Search all Hiſtory, and you ſhall find no Period
Time free from theſe Miſeries, in one Part of
World or other. And keep Company with y
own Contemporaries, be it in what Part or Age
the World ſoever, and tell me truly, whether
nity and Pride, Cenſoriouſneſs and Detracti
Spight and Envy, Diſſimulation and Fraud,
bauchery and Profaneneſs, Swearing and Blaſp
my, Lying and Perjury, or ſome of theſe, do
make up the moſt conſiderable Part of the Conv
ſation. In ſhort, the greater part of Mankind
vern themſelves directly as Beaſts do. Senſua
is their Principle; Appetite, and Paſſion,
Power are their Law; and Juſtice and Reaſon,
ligion and Virtue, are Rules and Meaſures, m
talked of indeed, but infinitely oftner to be
with in Pretence, than in Practice. And, if
this diſorder do, as it moſt certainly does, proc
from an inordinate Affection for the World,
my Reaſon judge, whether upon this account
Temptation and Sin alone, but much more u
this added to the other Reaſons aſſigned bef
our Saviour did not expreſs himſelf very ſignific
ly and juſtly, when he compared the World v
its Cares and Pleaſures, to Thorns.

SEC

SECT. IV.

How these Thorns choke the Word, and make it unfruitful.

OF these Thorns the Sower from Heaven affirms, that they choke this good Seed of the Divine Word, and render the Soil over-run with them (the Men of worldly Dispositions) *unfruitful*. And he expresses himself upon this occasion by a Word that properly denotes stopping the Breath, or Suffocation for want of Air. Now thus it is here. The Persons, whom this sort of Spirit possesses, are strangled, as it were, with gross Vapours, and distempered Humours, and the refreshing Air of heavenly Life can find no Passage to their Hearts. For it is not possible for both these Spirits to abide together, and we are told the sad Condition of them who want the latter: *If a Man*, says the Apostle, *have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*. And, since the distinguishing the Tree by its Fruit is a plain and an universal Rule, we cannot be at a loss to discern the Contrariety of these two Spirits, by the Contrariety of their respective Products. St. *Paul* hath left us such Marks, as cannot possibly deceive us in making the Judgment. *The fruit of the Spirit*, he tells us, *is Love*, the common Root and Band of all Virtues; *Joy*, Satisfaction in serving God; *Peace*, Quiet of Conscience, and an Evenness of Mind under any Dispensations of Providence; *Long-suffering*, opposed to Impatience; *Gentleness*, Sweetness of Behaviour, and Tenderness in Reproving or Punishment; *Goodness*, kind Dispositions, and actual Performance, where it lies in its Power to be beneficial; *Faith*, Fidelity and Constancy; *Meekness* in not being hastily provoked, not resenting Injuries deeply, not arroga-

Rom. viii. 9.

Gal. v. 22, 23.

ting to it ſelf more than its due; *Temperance*, pure and chaſte Converſation, and a reſerved uſe o even lawful Enjoyments. *Againſt theſe three is n Law.* They are ſo evidently conducive to the per fecting Human Nature, and the Benefit of Socie ty, that no Law of God or Man ever prohibite any of theſe, but always laboured to oblige Men t and by all poſſible means to enforce, the Practi of them. But let us caſt our Eyes a little bac and the ſame Chapter will preſent us with anoth Catalogue of a very different Character and Com plexion, which proceeds from the Spirit of t
v. 19, 20, 21. World: *The works of the Fleſh are manifeſt*, whi are theſe; *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſ viouſneſs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Varianc Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies, E vyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revelings, and ſu like: of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo t you in time paſt, that they who do ſuch things ſhall n inherit the Kingdom of God.*

From hence now it can be no hard matter, f any Man to determine concerning his own Sta what manner of Spirit he is of, and wheth
v. 24. he belong to the Kingdom of God or no. *Th that are Chriſt's*, the Apoſtle adds, *have crucif the Fleſh with its Affections and Luſts*; that is, Th have ſo mortified their bodily Appetites, as n to be drawn into Sin, by any vicious Inclinatio from within, or Temptations from without. A again, *They that live in the Spirit muſt walk in Spirit*, their Behaviour muſt be ſuch as may tes fy what Principle they act upon, and are fluenced by. So then, if our Works be Carn and Worldly, our Spirit it follows is ſo too; a we are dead in Spirit, have no part in Chriſt, n any place in his Kingdom. And, ſince t World does not only abound with ſuch Works, b diſpoſes them that love and ſerve it to the Pract and Habits of them; ſince it permits no Fruits

Chri

Christ's Spirit to grow, or leaves so much as a possibility for the good Seed to come to any Maturity, where these Tares have taken Root; hence it is, that the Scriptures always represent *Christ* and the World in a State of Opposition, and the Dispositions agreeable to each of them as incompatible with one another. Thus himself tells his Disciples, *The World cannot receive the Spirit of Truth*, and *that neither He nor his Servants* and true Followers are of the World, though *they live in the World*. And in his Prayer a little before his Passion, *O Righteous Father, the World hath not known thee, but I have known thee; and these* (his Disciples) *have known that thou hast sent me*. Hence St. *John* says, that *If any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him*. And St. *James*, that *whosoever will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God*. St. *Paul* speaks of prophane and negligent Christians being *condemned with the World*. And *Christ* seems to insinuate no less in that dreadful Exception to his Father; *I pray for them, I pray not for the World, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine*.

John xiv. 17. John xvii. 14. Ibid 25. 1 John ii. 15. Jam. iv. 4. 1 Cor. ii. 32. John xvii. 9.

You see what difference he puts between those that are his and God's, and those others whom he comprehends under the name of *the World*. And oh! that Men would well consider this; that they would think, how dismal the Case of those People is, who are excluded from the Intercessions and Prayers of *the Lamb, that takes away the Sins of the World*. Those Prayers, in which his very Enemies and Tormentors, and Crucifiers, were once allowed a part. This certainly would awake them out of their stupid Security; This would check their most busy Projections, and take off from the Relish of their sinful Delights; and by abating their Love for the present Vanities, shew them the Necessity of a future and everlasting Provision; for which, if they take no care, and are not duly qualifyed,

better were it for the greateſt and gayeſt of them all ten thouſand times better, if he had never bee born.

No wonder then, if St. *Paul* takes care to adviſ his *Romans*, that they would by no means *be conform ed to this preſent World*; but be *transformed* t *Chriſt*'s likeneſs *by the renewing of their Mind.* N wonder, if St. *John*, who recorded thoſe Saying of his Maſter upon this Subject, juſt now recite and was throughly acquainted with his Mind in th Matter, cries out like a Man giving warning t People, that are running upon the very Mouth Danger, *Love not the World, neither the things th are in the World.* For if we may not love it, if w are not allowed to conform our ſelves to it, but our manifeſt Peril, and under the ſevereſt Pena ties; if the being Followers and Imitators of *Chri* requires Practices and Diſpoſitions diametrical oppoſite to the Children of this Generation; if be like one of theſe excludes us from the Inher tance of the Children of Light, though this go farther than meerly a Compliance with the Va ties and Cuſtoms of the World; what ſhall becon of thoſe abandoned Men, who do not only comp with, but even court it; that inſtead of bei carried along with it admire it, and reſt in it, a lay out all their time, and pains, and thought, up nothing elſe?

Rom. xii. 2.

1 John ii. 15.

If we would be ſatisfied what provokes *Chr* to hate the World to ſuch a Degree, St. *Joh* hath reſolved that Point too, where he ſays, th *the whole World lies in Wickedneſs.* This is the on thing, which the Spirit of the World leads to, a is ſet upon. It tends to Pride and Vain-glory, Ambition and Covetouſneſs, to Malice and Reveng to ſenſual Pleaſures, and all manner of vile Indu gences. Quite contrary to the Spirit and Temp of *Chriſt*, which diſpoſes to Humility and Mee neſs, to Contentedneſs and Moderation, to fo

1 John v. 19.

giving Injuries, and loving Enemies; to Abſtinence and Purity, to Self-denial, and taking up the Croſs; to a generous Diſdain of all earthly Pleaſures, and an eager Purſuit of the Kingdom of Heaven. He hates the World, becauſe it hates Him; it perſecutes the Good, and advances the Bad, it does ſo far as in it lies, extirpate Virtue, and plant Vice in its ſtead. It ſhuts the Doors againſt him when he knocks, and ſtifles all the Motions of his good Spirit.

Since then the World is ſo vain in it ſelf, ſo deceitful in its Promiſes; ſince its Enjoyments are ſo tempered with Trouble, and ſo full of Danger, as we have ſeen; ſince it is a profeſſed Enemy to *Chriſt*, and excluded from his Favour and his Kingdom; what can we make of it, but a Scene of Folly, a Market of falſe and counterfeit Goods, a Labyrinth of Error, a barren Wilderneſs, a tempeſtuous Sea, a fair Garden without Fruit, a Den of Baſilisks and deadly Scorpions, a Fountain of bitter Waters, a Valley of Tears, and at the beſt a delightful Frenzy? Hear St. *Chryſoſtom* ſumming up the Evidence againſt it. He tells us it hath nothing in it, but Sorrow and Shame, Repentance and Reproach, Folly and Madneſs, Toil and Terror, Sickneſs, and Sin, and Death. The Reſt it propoſes, is full of Anguiſh; the Security it gives, without any Foundation; the Labours it engages Man in, without any Fruit; the Sorrow it brings hath no true Comfort; the Mirth it affords is of no Continuance; the Miſeries it involves us in, have neither End nor Remedy. And if theſe, and many Evils more, beyond the wit of Man to expreſs or imagine, attend the Love and Service of it; if there be no one ſubſtantial Advantage to be had from it; Why will we be ſo mad to be cheated with this falſe Diſguiſe? Why do we not ſhew our ſelves Men, and pluck off this Vizard, and effectually convince our Minds of its Vanity? Why do

we

we ſuffer our ſelves to be hindred in, or kept back from the Service of God, ſo reaſonable in it ſelf, ſo profitable in its Recompence, by ſo mere a Trifle, which can never compenſate our Loſs ſuſtained by ſticking to it? Shall we pretend to Reaſon and Prudence, and yet manage our Affairs no better? Shall we, with our Eyes open, make ſo bad a Choice? I ſay with our Eyes open; for, after what hath been ſaid upon this Subject, no Man can pretend that he is not ſufficiently warned againſt the Dangers of this Obſtruction to Holy Reſolution and a Virtuous Life.

SECT. V.

How we may uſe the World ſafely, and to our Advantage.

BUT ſtill there is one thing more behind, requiſite to give a Diſcourſe upon this Subject its Uſefulneſs and Perfection. For, ſince the World, bad as it is, muſt yet be our Dwelling and the Troubles and Temptations of it our Diſcipline and Tryal for a certain Seaſon, it is highly neceſſary, that, before this Argument be entirely diſmiſs'd, I ſhould endeavour to put my Reader in a way, how he may avoid the dangers of this perilous State, and even uſe this World, which is the Inſtrument of eternal Ruin to ſo many, in ſuch a prudent manner, as may turn to his own Gain and greater Happineſs.

For the *Firſt* of theſe Particulars, which relates to the avoiding its Dangers, I know not what to adviſe better, than that Men would very frequently and ſeriouſly bend their Thoughts, upon all that is contained in the foregoing Sections, for the better diſcerning the Vanity and Deceitfulneſs of the World, and the Diſcovery of thoſe Snares by

by which unwary Souls are caught. *Surely*, says *Solomon*, *in vain the Net is ſpread, in the ſight of any Bird:* And, if Men have fair warning, and are made ſenſible, what their Danger is, and where it lies; their Deſtruction, if they run into it afterwards, is from themſelves, and will admit of no Excuſe. From that account in *Joſhua*, that Spies made their Eſcape from *Jericho*, by the way of the Mountains, *Origen*, according to his Allegorical Method of interpreting Scripture, obſerves, that the only way to avoid the Dangers of the World, is to keep upon the Hills: That is, to be above the World, and to direct our ſteps to a higher and better Place. Thus St. *Paul* ſays of himſelf, and of all good Chriſtians, *Our Converſation is in Heaven.* And, no doubt, the leſs we entangle our ſelves with the Cares of earthly Things, the ſafer and eaſier our Minds will be. For, as the Fowler hath no hopes of his Prey, till he can lure her down to pitch; ſo the Devil, by his ſuggeſtions, ſays in effect to Us, as he did once to *Chriſt*; *Caſt thy ſelf down.* And he cannot deſtroy us, till we ſtoop to his Baits; and taſte, and fall in Love with, and faſten our Hearts down to, the things here below.

Prov. i. 17.

Joſhua ii.

Phil. iii. 30.

Now, ſince our Affections muſt of neceſſity be placed upon ſome Object, the main Point will be to fix upon One, truly noble and worthy of them, to raiſe our Minds up to Heaven, by pious and devout Thoughts, and pure Deſires. Could we arrive at *David*'s Temper, we ſhould be ſafe. The World would have nothing left to catch hold of us by, could we ſay, as he did, from the very bottom of our Hearts; *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is nothing upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my life, and my Portion for ever.* The Apoſtle had ſecured himſelf, by that Diſpoſition which he expreſſes, when he ſays, *The World is cruci-*

Pſal. lxxiii. 25, 26.

Gal. ii. 20. Phil. iii. 8.

crucified to me, and I unto the World. Yea verily, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the Knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt: for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt. And, in another Place, *Nevertheleſs, though we walk in the fleſh, we do not war after the fleſh.* Would we but imitate theſe glorious Examples, learn to ſee the World as it really is, and to deſpiſe it, as in truth it deſerves; Would we ſet *our Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth*, thus riſing with *Chriſt* to his and our promiſed Kingdom, we ſhould mount above the reach of Danger, and all the Temptations of the Devil would no more be able to hurt us, than a *Snare* up on the Ground does the Bird that ſoars in the Air and flies away from the Danger it ſees.

2 Cor. x.

But farther yet, It is in our Power, not only to eſcape, but even to improve upon, and to profit by, theſe Temptations. And our Lord hath directed us how this may be done, when he ſaid *Make to your ſelves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs.* The Rich Man in Hell, mentioned in that Chapter, had it once in his own diſpoſal, to have never come into that place of Torment at all. And ſo hath every Man, to whom God gives Wealth and Opportunities in abundance, of making himſelf happier by it to all Eternity. For, as I obſerved formerly, Riches are not the neceſſary Cauſe, but the occaſion only, of their Owner's Deſtruction. And this fatal Effect they never have, except when they are abuſed to evil purpoſes, or not employed to good ones. The Caſe is directly the ſame with *Honours*, and *Pleaſures*, and every thing that Men are uſually fond of here below. And therefore, what I ſhall ſay here upon One, I deſire may be, and it may very eaſily be underſtood of, and applyed proportionably to, all the reſt.

Luke xvi. 9.

Our Buſineſs here then is to take notice and warning by the Dangers of others, and when we

ee or read of their Deſtruction, that we be careful o ſteer a contrary Courſe, and not wreck our ſelves pon the ſame Rock. Let then the Men of plenful Fortunes conſider the Argument made uſe of y the Apoſtle to provoke them to good Works. *Be not deceived*; *Whatſoever a Man ſoweth, that hall he alſo reap. He that ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall eap ſparingly, and he that ſoweth bountifully ſhall eap bountifully.* Now, according to this Rule, what mighty Harveſt might Rich Men ſecure to themelves, who have ſtore of this Seed lying by them, nd ſuch an abundance of Ground proper to ſow it pon? For our Lord ſays, *That the poor we have alays with us, and whenever we will, we may do them ood.* Let them remember what it was, that diinguiſhed the *Sheep on the right Hand, from the Goats n the left*: Even the free Performance, and the iggardly and ſullen refuſal of good Offices, and Works of Charity; That cloathing the Naked, eeding the Hungry, and laying out their Subſtance nd their Pains in Kindneſs and Compaſſion, as God ad enabled them, entitled theſe to that joyful entence, *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the ingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the orld.* And let them once more, if the Hopes of eward will not win them, be awed at leaſt by fear of uniſhment; tremble at the Teſtimony their Bleſings will one Day bear againſt them; and reflect, hat becauſe the Rich Man in the Parable had *reeived his good things in his life time*, but would not o good with them, therefore *he was tormented in hat flame*; and could not prevail for ſo mean a Requeſt, as one *drop of Water upon the tip of a Finger, o cool his Tongue.*

Gal. vi. 7. 2 Cor. ix. 6.

Mark xiv. 7.

Mat. xxv.

Luke xvi. 25, &c.

I will conclude this Chapter with a Parable reated by *Damaſcene* in the Perſon of *Barlaam* the Hermite, and very appoſite to our preſent purpoſe. "A certain State, he tells us, there was, where, "for many Generations, the Subjects were wont to

Vid. Dam. *oper. p.* 842. *Edit. Bazil.*

" to chuſe themſelves a King, one of foreign Ex
" traction, and very obſcure, and altogether unac
" quainted with the Laws and Uſages of the Coun
" try. This Prince was very abſolute, and migh
" do whatever he pleaſed for the ſpace of one Yea
" But, at the Expiration of this Term, while h
" was enjoying himſelf in the moſt profound Secu
" rity, and living, as if he thought his Reign woul
" never have an End, they made a ſudden Inſur
" rection, diveſted him of his Royal Robes, drag
" ged him naked through the City, and baniſhe
" him thus deſtitute and forlorn, without ſo muc
" as Cloaths to cover him, into a Remote *Iſland*
" where he led the reſt of his Days in Poverty an
" Miſery, as ſurprizing as his former Plenty an
" Advancement to the Throne had been. It hap
" pened that One Perſon, wiſer than his Predece
" ſors, was thus promoted, who immediately, in
" formed himſelf of this Cuſtom, behaved himſe
" with great Prudence and Moderation in hi
" Power, and bethought himſelf of making ſom
" Proviſion againſt that time of Abdication, whic
" others had never ſhewed any Regard to. Thi
" Prince then, well aware how ſhort his Reign wa
" like to be, tranſmitted out of the Treaſury, whic
" was entirely at his diſpoſal, vaſt Sums of Mone
" and Jewels of great Value into that Iſland, whithe
" he expected to be ſent off. When the Year cam
" about, his Subjects treated him with their cuſto
" mary Inſolence. But at his Arrival in the uſua
" place of Exile, whither he went with great Con
" fidence and Security, while others that had gon
" before him, languiſh'd in Miſery and Want, h
" found his Money lodged in ſafe Hands, was re
" ceived with univerſal Reſpect, and lived in great
" er Splendor than ever he had done before whilſ
" upon the Throne.

The Application of this Parable is very natu
ral and eaſy. That State is this World, a Country
no

t properly our own. Here Men once poor, who me naked into the World, are raiſed to great enty and Dignity; but after a ſhort Period, and any times when they leaſt apprehend ſuch a change, y are ſent as naked out of the World, as at firſt y came into it. Thoſe, who are ſo imprudent, to make no Preparation for this mighty Revolu-n, find great Affliction and Miſery in their new elling. But the wiſe Prince, who foreſees and upon his Guard againſt this Calamity, is that od Man, who during his Proſperity here upon rth, ſends before him the Treaſure of Good orks. And theſe, at the Day of his Death, ſecure n a kind of Reception in the other World; and wn him with Glory and Happineſs infinitely eater, than it was poſſible for the Condition of ortality to enjoy. But they, who come thither e the fooliſh Virgins, without Oyl in their Lamps, et with no better a Welcome than *I know ye not*; y, which is worſe, with that terrible doom of, *e curſed into everlaſting Fire.* From which ama-g Malediction, our *good Lord deliver us all, and nt us ſo to paſs through things Temporal, that we lly loſe not the things Eternal.*

CHAP. V. SECT. I.

Fifth Obſtruction to a Holy Reſolution: Preſumption upon God's Mercy.

Eror we ſay is infinite; and, though the way of Truth be one and ſtreight, yet the falſe and crooked Paths, that lead to Sin and Damna-, are very thick on each ſide; And, how con-y ſoever they may ſeem to each other, yet erminate in the ſame fatal Place at laſt. It is edible, how many different Stratagems the

Devil hath on Foot to ruin us, and with what a fa
tal Addreſs he accommodates his Temptations
the Temper and Complexion of every Sinne
Some there are, upon whom none of the Impedi
ments already mentioned have any Power to faſten
and yet they are caught in another *Snare*, at leaſt
deſtructive as any of the other. The *Firſt* Obſtru
ction, we ſet our ſelves to remove, was Deſpair
God's Mercy, which repreſented the *Sinner*'s Da
ger to him in ſo ghaſtly a Form, that he thoug
Repentance to no manner of Purpoſe, and the Se
tence gone out againſt him to be abſolute and ir
verſible. But now we have to deal with a ſort
Men in direct Oppoſition to thoſe Men, who va
ly preſume upon that Mercy, and think it in th
Power to revoke and eſcape that Sentence wh
ever they pleaſe. Lay before them the heinouſ
of their Sins, and the neceſſity of Amendment,
they think all Arguments anſwered with this;
God is gracious and willeth not the Death of any
ner; that, *as his Majeſty is, ſo is his Mercy*, not
ly great, but infinite; and therefore not to be o
come by any, though never ſo foul, though n
ſo numberleſs Provocations. *Chriſt* hath died
them, and commanded them to truſt in his Me
which are an Overbalance to all their Sins, an
long as they put their truſt in theſe, it is not p
ble for them to periſh. In Confidence of this
fuge they prolong their wicked Courſes, and
this worſt of Sins to all the reſt, that they mak
Goodneſs of God a Foundation for diſpleaſing
acting in defiance of him. They are in the hi
degree injurious to the Divine Majeſty, *make*
abound, becauſe *Grace* hath *abounded*; and con
in their Wickedneſs, for that very Reaſon, be
his bleſſed Son hath ſhed his Blood to purge
take it away.

But is not God indeed merciful? No dou
is unſpeakably Merciful; There is no end
me

measure of his Kindneſs to wretched Man. Mercy
his eſſential Perfection, his very Nature, and he
n no more ceaſe to be gracious, than he can ceaſe
be God. But, though this be One, it is not the
nly Perfection of this Divine Nature. And we
uſt always ſo conceive of God, as not to ſet up one
ttribute in contradiction to, and to the Deſtruction
another. *Gracious is the Lord, and Righteous,* Pſal. xxv.
s the Pſalmiſt; and therefore we deceive our
n Souls, if we ſo poſſeſs them with Notions of
Mercy, as quite to forget and diſregard his Ju-
ce. *All the ways of the Lord are Mercy and Truth,*
they are ſo to *ſuch as keep his Covenant and his*
timonies; For ſuch only have a Right to his Pro-
ſes; and his *Truth* is not engaged to extend theſe
farther, than Men qualify themſelves by Per-
mance of that Condition, upon which theſe Pro-
ſes are ſuſpended. Every true Convert lays
d upon theſe Excellencies in Conjunction; and
ſiders the inviolable Friendſhip and mutual Har-
y which is eſtabliſhed between them. If a Sin-
lay hold upon Mercy alone, he periſhes by Pre-
ption; if upon Juſtice only, he ſinks into De-
r. But, when theſe two conſpire together, to
e ſuch Ideas of Almighty God, as reſult from
ue Temperament of theſe Perfections; then is
Soul happy indeed; free from the ſad Anxiety
groundleſs Terrors; free from the treacherous
teries of carnal Security, and in the direct way
uſtification and Salvation.

. *Auguſtin* hath cut the middle Way between
two Extremes excellently well. "Let thoſe *Tract.* 33.
in Joan.
Men, ſays he, who are ſo highly delighted with
e Mercy and Gentleneſs of God, call to Mind,
nd tremble at his Juſtice and his Truth." God
xceeding Gracious, 'tis confeſt, nay, he is
g-ſuffering, and not eaſily provoked: But ſtill
a Righteous Judge, Strong, though he be *Patient*.
provoked indeed *every Day*, but there is a Sea- Pſal. vii.

ſon of Wrath, before which *if a Man do not turn he will whet his Sword.* Two things there are, tha above all others threaten Sinners with eternal Ruin The one is hoping too much, which we call Pre ſumption: The other hoping too little, which termed Deſpair. He that ſays to himſelf, God is Good God, a Merciful God, and therefore I wi follow my own wicked Imaginations, for that ver Reaſon, becauſe he is a Good and a Merciful God This Man is in danger of being undone by hopin too much. He that is ſenſible of the Heinouſne of his Sins, and the Wrath of God, but takes for granted, that thoſe Sins cannot be Pardone nor that Wrath Pacified; that ſays in his ow Heart, I am ſure to be damned, and therefo Why ſhould I deny or reſtain my Inclinations any ſinful Gratification they hanker after? t Man is killed by Deſpair. Let us obſerve th what Method God takes to ſave theſe Peop and correct their miſtaken Apprehenſions of t Matter. To the Preſumptuous belongs t warning of the Son of *Sirach*, *Concerning Propi*

Eccluſ v. 5, 6, 7. *tion, be not without fear to add Sin unto Sin. not his Mercy is great, he will be pacified for the m titude of my Sins; for Mercy and Wrath come f him, and his Indignation reſteth upon Sinners. M no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off f Day to Day, for ſuddenly ſhall the Wrath of come forth, and in thy ſecurity thou ſhalt be deſtro and Periſh in the Day of Vengeance.* To the Fea and Deſpairing is that affectionate Invitation

Ezek. xviii. 27. 30. rected by *Ezekiel: At what time ſoever the Wi Man turneth away from his Wickedneſs, which hath committed, and do that which is lawful and ri he ſhall ſave his Soul alive. Repent and turn ſelves from all your Tranſgreſſions, and ſo Iniquity not be your Ruin.*

So manifeſt is the Danger, ſo great the Foll thoſe wretched Men, who ſupport themſe

with a vain Confidence in the Goodneſs and Compaſſion of Almighty God, and make this an occaſion of hardening and eſtranging their Hearts from him and his Ways. And ſurely it is a moſt abſurd Conſequence, and a perverſe Method of reaſoning, to argue thus: My God is Merciful and Long-Suffering, and therefore I will abuſe his Mercy, and weary out his Patience. The Scripture, it is evident, inſtructs us to draw a quite contrary Inference from theſe comfortable Premiſes. God is compaſſionate and ready to forgive, he waits long for my Converſion, and does not cut me off in the middle of my Sins; but the longer he forbears, the heavier will his Puniſhments be at laſt, if not prevented by a timely Reformation. The greater his Patience, the more unpardonable is my Neglect; and therefore I ought by no means to make any Delay, but to accept and lay hold of his Grace, while the Day of Grace laſteth. This is the Pattern St. *Paul* hath left us, who puts the Caſe with ſome vehemence and indignation, as if it implyed a more than common Degree of inſenſibility to be guilty of it. *Deſpiſeſt thou*, ſays he, *the Riches of his Goodneſs and Forbearance, and Long-Suffering, not knowing that the Goodneſs of God leadeth thee to Repentance? But, after thy hardneſs and impenitent Heart treaſureſt up unto thy ſelf Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God?* Theſe words moſt manifeſtly import, that the Reaſon, why God defers his Vengeance, is thereby to give Space, and to diſpoſe our Minds to repent; And, that no Man's account is like to be ſo dreadful, as his, who is not won over by theſe diſpenſations of Kindneſs; That, beſides the Sins ſuch Perſons commit, the Opportunities and Mercies they have ſtood out againſt ſhall all be imputed, and highly inflame the Reckoning at laſt. Obſtinacy does but heap up Wrath in reſerve, and the lon- Rom. ii. 4, 5.

ger we continue in it, the more Work and the mor Sorrow we cut out for our ſelves, if ever we amen at all. But St. *Auguſtine* hath added another ver dreadful Conſideration, which renders even th very ſuſpicious; For, ſays he, *If he offer th Grace to day, take it while it may be had; for th canſt not tell whether he will repeat the Proffer to Mo row. If he give thee Life and Underſtanding, a Memory this Week, uſe them out of Hand, for th are Bleſſings which no Man can enſure to himſelf, a ſome, or all of them, may be taken away from thee next.*

Aug. Tract. 33. in Joan.

The Holy Prophet begins his Seventy Thi Pſalm with Magnifying and Admiring the Goo neſs of God to his Servants, to ſuch as are an upright and *clean Heart*. And yet the ma Thing he drives at there is to repreſent the da gerous Condition of Wicked Men in Proſperi and the heavy Juſtice of God upon thoſe, wh notwithſtanding ſuch Proſperity, ſo far above, very contrary to their deſerts, will yet be wick ſtill. He forewarns them, that this will not always, that *God ſets them upon ſlippery places*, and after a while, *Caſt them down into Deſtruction*. T *as a Dream when one awaketh* ſo ſhall this beau ful Image of *Happineſs vaniſh*, and that there is one way to prevent this Terror and Deſolati which is by *drawing near to God*; which, if they ſt ſtill refuſe to do, he reads their inevitable Doo in thoſe Words; *Lo, they that are far from thee ſ periſh, thou ſhalt utterly deſtroy all them that* br Faith and *commit Fornication againſt thee*. So th how good ſoever God is for a time to the Wick this can be no Security, that he intends for e to continue ſo; much leſs, from his Kindneſs, the Godly, can any Relief to the Wicked be ferred. Heaven and Hell are not more diſta Light and Darkneſs are not more contrary, t his Dealings with theſe two ſorts of Men.

v. 27.

as the ſame Pſalmiſt obſerves, *the Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers. But the Countenance of the Lord is ſet againſt them that do evil, to root out the remembrance of them from off the Earth.* Pſalm xxxiv. 15, 16.

It was a Practice very common with falſe Prophets heretofore, which the true Prophets always exclaimed loudly againſt, to ſeduce the People, and uphold them in their Wickedneſs, by crying *Peace, Peace*, when there was no Peace; Nor indeed can there poſſibly be any to the Wicked. *David* hath told us upon what Terms only we may have Confidence and Hope in God, when he ſays, *Offer the Sacrifice of Righteouſneſs and put your truſt in the Lord.* Then he will *lift up the Light of his Countenance upon us, and put Gladneſs in our Hearts, more than in the Time that Mens Corn, and Wine, and Oyl increaſed.* The Senſe of Favour and Friendſhip with a reconciled God will diffuſe a more ſolid and ſenſible Joy through our Souls, than all the Worldly Proſperity imaginable can yield to thoſe, whoſe Hearts are moſt ſet upon the World. To the ſame Purpoſe is that of St. *John*, *Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. But if our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things.* It is the vaineſt Thing in the World to talk of Truſt in God's Mercy, while our own Conſciences fly in our Faces and reproach us with ſuch Diſpoſitions and Practices, as he hath declared he cannot approve, and will one Day bring into Judgment. Pſal. iv. 5. 1 John iii. 20, 21.

It may poſſibly be of ſome Service in the preſent Argument, to put my Reader in remembrance, how God hath dealt with ſeveral eminent Perſons, once high in his Love and Favour, how he hath changed his Affection upon their giving him Offence, and broke that League of Friendſhip which was once between them; And, in a word, how

ſtrict he hath been in calling them to account, and how ſevere in inflicting his Puniſhments. And here methinks it might abate Mens Security, and take down from their Preſumption ſomewhat at leaſt, would they but in the firſt Place reflect upon the Fall of the Angels: Creatures ſo honoured in their Creation, endued with Excellencies, the neareſt of any, reſembling the Perfections of the Divine Nature; inſomuch, that the Scripture calls them the *Sons of God*, in a more exalted and peculiar Senſe, than belongs to any Son, who is not very God. And yet theſe, for the Commiſſion of one Sin of Pride, and ſuch a Rebellion againſt the Divine Majeſty, as ſome have imagined to proceed no farther than Thought only, loſt all the Privileges of their bleſt Eſtate; the Love and Favour of God was turned into Hatred irreconcilable, and from the Regions of Bliſs theſe once glorious Spirits are caſt down into Priſon, and, as St. *Jude* ſays, *reſerved in everlaſting Chains under Darkneſs unto the Judgment of the great Day*; conſigned over to Hell, and Deſpair, and eternal Vengeance, without Hope, without Redemption, without any poſſibility of Eſcape, or miligation of their inſupportable Torments.

After this it pleaſed Almighty God to make himſelf another Friend, one of Fleſh and Blood, deſigned to ſucceed into the Happineſs, of which thoſe Angels by voluntury Tranſgreſſion had deprived themſelves. This was our firſt Parent in Paradiſe, where God converſed with him after a moſt familiar manner, and honoured him with ſignal Inſtances of his Care and Kindneſs. He walked and diſcourſed with him, he gave him Dominion of the Creatures here below, and made him his Vicegerent; He put the fierceſt and ſtrongeſt Animals in ſubjection under him, brought them before him, that, as a mark of Authority, he might determine by what Names each of them ſhould

hould be called. He miraculouſly created a Help nd a Companion for Society and Relief to him; e bleſſed them both, and was exceeding liberal in ll poſſible Demonſtrations of Love to them: But las! this beautiful Scene was quickly changed in- o a very melancholy and diſmal one. *Adam* by he commiſſion of one Sin, and that too at the per- uaſion of another Perſon, fell from all his glorious Prerogatives, was baniſhed Paradiſe, condemned o a Life of Labour and Care, of Sorrow and Mi- ery, of Sickneſs and Pain, to death of Body, and hich is worſe, to eternal Damnation. Nor did is Calamity terminate in Him, but extended to ll his Poſterity deſcended from him after that Guilt was contracted. And this not otherwiſe to e reverſed, but by a painful Repentance, and the ayment of a Ranſom, no leſs in Dignity and Va- e than the Bleſſed and Eternal Son of God made Man, ſuffering and dying in the ſame Nature that ad ſinned; and by his innocent Life and bitter Death atoning for the Offences of all Mankind; hoſe common Repreſentative this Second *Adam* ecame in their Puniſhment, as the Firſt *Adam* had rmerly been in the Offence by which that Puniſh- ent was incurred.

Thoſe Two Wonders of Men, *Moſes* and *Aaron*, ere of ſingular Authority and high in Favour with od; inſomuch that their Prayers and Interceſ- ons for the People, over whom they preſided, ever returned empty and unſucceſsful. And yet, hen theſe excellent Perſons provoked God at the Waters of Strife, in diſtruſting his Power, and the Miracles he promiſed to work for the Preſervation f the *Iſraelitiſh* Nation, this was interpreted as great a Diſhonour done to God, that they re- ived a ſharp Rebuke, and all their Repentance ould not prevail for a Remiſſion of their Crime. he Guilt indeed was taken off, but not the Pu- iſhment; for this conſiſted in their not being ſuf-

fered

fered to enter the Land of Promiſe, but dyin with the reſt of their unbelieving Brethren, who Carcaſſes fell in the Wilderneſs. They intreate God moſt earneſtly to have this Penalty taken off but ſtill the Anſwer was, *Becauſe ye believed not,* Numb. xx. 12. *ſanctify me in the Eyes of the Congregation of* Iſrae *therefore ye ſhall not bring this Congregation into t Land which I have given them.*

It ought to be look'd upon as a particular Favou to *Saul*, that God made choice of him to be t firſt King over his own People. We find hi commanding *Samuel* to do him unexampled H nours, commending and taking expreſs care of hi crowning his Wars with wonderful Succeſs, a by his means working mighty Deliverances, fro the Yoke of the *Philiſtines*, who then grievouſly d ſtreſſed his People. And yet afterwards, upo the Breach of one Command, in reſerving ſome the Spoils taken from *Amalek*, which he had e preſs Orders utterly to deſtroy; nay, though h pretended to have ſaved them out of a religious D ſign, we find him rejected utterly by God, degr ded from his Royal Dignity, delivered up into t Power and Poſſeſſion of an evil Spirit, reduced infinite Miſeries, and ſo abandoned at laſt, as to f by his own Hands; his Family diſinherited, h Sons put to reproachful Deaths, and all his Poſter ty ruined and extinct.

David, whom God appointed to reign in h ſtead, and exalted from a mean Condition, who e cell'd all other Princes in the particular Tende neſs God had for him, and was honoured with Title, of *A Man after his own Heart:* yet when Luxu ry and Proſperity had betrayed him into Two the blackeſt Offences, receives the dreadful Me ſage by *Nathan* of moſt heavy diſpleaſure kin led, and ſevere Puniſhments decreed, againſt hi Theſe were not to be diverted by all his Praye and Tears, his Faſting and Humiliation, of whi th

he Book of *Pſalms* gives us ſo large an Account. All which make it very evident, that no degree of favour with God can ſecure Men from ſmarting under the Rod of his Juſtice, if they ſhall dare to offend him; and that our Saviour's Words admit of no Exception, *Unleſs ye repent, ye ſhall periſh.* The utter Rejection of *Cain*, and his Poſterity; The Deſtruction of the whole World, except *Noah* and his Family, by a Flood; and that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* and the neighbouring Cities, by Fire from Heaven; the exemplary Vengeance executed upon *Corah* and his Company; and the other Plagues ſent upon the *Iſraelites* for their Idolatry and Rebellion; the ſudden Death of *Nadab* and *Abihu* in the Old Teſtament, and *Ananias* and *Sapphira* and others in the New; Theſe, and many other Examples, are therefore left upon record in Holy Writ, to aſſure us, that *though Hand join in Hand the Wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed*, but that *God will repay the Sinner to his Face.*

Who, that conſiders theſe things, will not find himſelf obliged to confeſs with *Moſes*, that God *is a great God, a mighty and a terrible*: and with St. *Paul*, that *It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God?* For if God would not pardon ſo many of theſe Perſons already mentioned, for one ſingle Provocation; if ſome of them, not at their moſt inſtant Requeſt and upon the moſt ſolemn Humiliation; nay, which is infinitely more than all this; if he treated his own moſt Holy and Divine Son with ſuch unrelenting ſeverity, when he ſtood in the place of Sinners only, though he had no Sin properly his own; If the bitter Cup might not paſs from Him, though deprecated thrice with vehement Supplications, with Groans and Tears, with Agonies unſpeakable, and Sweats of Blood; What ſhall become of thee, Preſumptuous Sinner, who haſt ſo often, ſo grievouſly offended that Divine Majeſty? What Shadow

Deut. x.

Heb. x. 31.

dow of a Reaſon canſt thou have, to hope, that h will deal after an extraordinary manner with the and break the ſtated Meaſures of his Governmen and Juſtice for thy ſake? Art thou any better, a thou not indeed much worſe, than moſt of theſe Or canſt thou produce any Exemption, any Privi lege peculiar to thy ſelf? Is he not ſtill the ſam God that he was then, and are not the Rules o Juſtice eternal and inviolable? Whence then ca grow this fond Imagination, that notwithſtandin thy continuing to provoke him, thou ſhalt at la eſcape his Vengeance, and find him nothing in th own Caſe, but Gentleneſs and Mercy?

Deſcend a little lower yet, and from the Hiſto ry of former Ages, conſider the Judgments of th preſent: See how he deals with Mankind now even under the Covenant of Grace, after that h hath accepted the Reconciliation made by th Death and Paſſion of his own dear Son. Fo though Mercy be now Triumphant, yet is not Ju ſtice laid aſleep; but ſtrange and ſad Effects of i are offered to thy Obſervation daily. Conſide how many Millions of wretched Souls are ſtill per mitted to remain in Darkneſs; how many whol Nations, where the Light of the Goſpel onc ſhone in its brighteſt Luſtre, are now relapſed in to their primitive Night of Ignorance and Sin; how many, even among Chriſtians, are entangle in dangerous and fundamental Errors; how many, among thoſe who believe aright, diſhonour thei Chriſtian Profeſſion by Heatheniſh Lives: This will

Mat. vii. 13, 14.

ſhew the *ſtreightneſs* of the *Gate*, and the *narrow neſs* of the *Way*, that leads to Heaven, and how *few there be that go in thereat*. And why ſo few? not becauſe ſufficient Proviſion is not made for every Man, for *Chriſt* hath given himſelf a Ran ſom for all; but becauſe much the greater part render themſelves unworthy of that Salvation, and thruſt it away from them, by refuſing to comply with

ith the Commands of Repentance and *Holineſs*, he indiſpenſable Conditions, *without which no Man* ever did, ever can *ſee the Lord.* If then the uſtice of God exert it ſelf in ſo terrible a manner, ithout any prejudice to his Mercy; flatter not thy lf any longer, as if, notwithſtanding that Mercy, e may not damn thee for Sins, which thou haſt not nly committed with a high Hand, but aggravated ith this moſt inexcuſable Aggravation, of making y preſuming upon that Mercy an Encouragement nd Reaſon for committing them. Heb. xii. 14.

SECT. II.

In what reſpects God's Mercy is greater than his Juſtice.

I Expect after this, that the Preſumptuous Sinner will find ſome pretence from Scripture it ſelf, s if that were not conſiſtent with this rigor in puniſhing, and the vaſt numbers of them that peiſh everlaſtingly, ſo much ſuperior to thoſe that are ſaved. For is this poſſible with him, whoſe *Mercies are over all his Works*, whoſe *Mercy triumpheth over Judgment*; with Him, *who is ſlow to anger, not extreme to mark what is done amiſs*, and who, even when he is angry, *repenteth him of the evil, and keepeth not his anger for ever.* To all this it might ſuffice to anſwer in ſhort, that the Scripture is no leſs expreſs, concerning the Narrowneſs of the Gate that leads to Life, and the Fewneſs of them that go in at it; and the Broadneſs of the Way which leads to Deſtruction, and the vaſt Multitudes of wretched Men that walk in it. Our Lord's Authority in this Point will admit of no Diſpute; and therefore allowing (as we muſt) the matter of Fact; I ſhall now examine how the Mercy of God, notwithſtanding all this, does yet Mat. vii. 13, 14.

come

come up to all those Characters given of it in Holy Writ.

First then, the Mercy of God may truly be said to excel his other Attributes, because it is more concerned in the Happiness of Men, than any, or all the rest are, in their Misery and Punishment. The Salvation of them that are saved is entirely from the Mercy of God; He is the Worker and the proper and principal Cause of it: But the Damnation of them that are lost, is not properly from God, but from themselves, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self*, says the Prophet, *but in me is thy help*. So much in Him, that every good Action we do, every good Thought we think, is to be acknowledged an effect of the Divine Grace and Assistance: And, though there be a Faculty of Freedom and Choice in these Matters, yet does this in the present corrupt State of Human Nature tend and of its own accord determine us to ill: But all our Good is owing to those secret and sweet Influences of God's blessed Spirit, working with our Spirits; preventing and moving, assisting and over-ruling our Wills and Affections. So that none of the evil Acts, for which Men are damned, proceed from God; he tempts no Man to Sin, but every Man when he is tempted, follows his own Lusts, and acts without, and against God. But in our Salvation, and the Works which procure that, we may act with, and could not effect them without Him. Herein then Mercy most manifestly triumphs over Justice. Because God crowns his own Works in us, which are not ours entirely and originally, but only with regard to our Concurrence with, and consent to, his holy Motions; but he damns us for those Misdemeanors alone, which are in the strictest Sense our own, and such as he hath no part nor the least co-operation in.

Hos. xii. 6.

Secondly, The Mercy of God exceeds his Justice, with regard to the general good Intentions and

Desires

Deſires which he hath for the Happineſs of Mankind. For St. *Paul* tells us, that *God would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; and himſelf frequently repeats that ſolemn Proteſtation, *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live.* Accordingly he gave command that the Goſpel, that *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation unto all Men*, ſhould be *preached to every Creature*, and ordained, that *Jeſus Chriſt ſhould be made a little lower than the Angels*, for this very purpoſe, *that he by the Grace of God ſhould taſte death for every Man.* So that Mercy is the Attribute, which he exerciſes willingly and freely, and this is extended to all without Exception. But the Exerciſe of Juſtice is rather a matter of Neceſſity and Conſtraint, and reſerved for ſuch only, as by their Obſtinacy, and undutiful Behaviour, compel him to this Expedient. This our Bleſſed Lord hath expreſs'd in a very plain and moving manner, when he with Tears in his Eyes uttered that affectionate Lamentation over the Holy City: *O that thou hadſt known in this thy day the things which belong unto thy Peace; but now they are hidden from thine Eyes.* And again, *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not? Behold your Houſe is left unto you deſolate.* Here we have an account of the Mercy of God, tendered to the *Jews* over and over, and upon their refuſal of theſe gracious Offers, then, and not till then, God betakes himſelf to his Juſtice. And, though the Miſeries he brought upon that inflexible People prove the Effects of that Juſtice to have been moſt amazing and terrible, yet ſtill his Mercy excels, in thoſe many Methods made uſe of before to reclaim and prevent them from falling

1 Tim. ii. 4.

Ezek. xviii. 23. Jer. iii. 12.

Mark xvi. 15.

Heb. ii. 9.

Luke xix. 42.

Mat. xxiii. 37, 38.

into final Deſtruction, which had been done effectually, had they not continued Proof againſt all the means of Grace, and drawn down that Ruin upon their own Heads, by rejecting and refuſing their own Happineſs.

Thirdly, The Mercy of God exceeds, even towards the Reprobate themſelves, and thoſe who are never the better by it, in all its Diſpenſations towards them; in this Life at leaſt, while they yet continue in a State of Diſcipline and Tryal. For Who can expreſs the infinite Advantages and Opportunities ſuch Men enjoy, and that unconceivable variety of Holy Arts made uſe of by God to draw them to himſelf? The enduing Men with a Principle of Free-will at firſt, and putting Life and Death in their own Diſpoſal; The aſſiſting that Will with ſupernatural Aſſiſtances to do good and ſuggeſting to them Holy Thoughts, and checking them inwardly, when they are about to comply with Evil: The inviting and importuning them with affectionate Exhortations, alluring them with Promiſes, encouraging them with Examples and ſweetening their Duty with temporal Bleſſings and Benefits innumerable: And, when theſe fail of their deſired Effect, having recourſe to other more awakening Methods; humbling them with Sickneſs, with Affliction, with gentle and wiſe Corrections of all ſorts: Giving them ſpace and leiſure to Repent, and furniſhing them with Plenty of occaſions to do good: Terrifying them by Threatnings of eternal Puniſhments, and ſetting before them the diſmal Conſequences of Diſobedience and Obſtinacy, if they will not be prevailed upon to repent and amend: All theſe Diſpenſations are the natural Reſult of Mercy and Kindneſs towards them; which render their Obſtinacy inexcuſable, and force the damned themſelves to confeſs, in the midſt of Tortures and Deſpair, that although the Execution of the Divine

Juſtice

ſtice be more ſevere and terrible, yet is it juſt
d right; ſuch as might have been avoided if they
ould have been wiſe in time; ſuch as bears no
oportion with the exceeding Greatneſs of his
ercy exhibited to them, while the proper Sea-
n of Mercy laſted; that is, while there was any
om left for ſecond and better Thoughts, and the
e of living upon Earth made it poſſible for them
reform and improve under it.

Thus then we ſee the Reaſon, why the Scripture
often makes mention of the Mercy of God, in
njunction with his Judgments, and his Juſtice,
his Truth; What an exact Agreement there
conſtantly between them, and what Influence
Conſideration of them ought to have upon our
arts and Lives; which is, to keep us from ſo
ſuming upon his Mercy, as not to be afraid of
Juſtice; nor ſo to dread the Rigor of his Ju-
e, as to deſpair of Mercy. For, in a Chri-
n's Duty, Fear and Hope ſhould always go hand
hand; and we never find any of the moſt emi-
t and perfect Saints ſo tranſported with the
er, as to diſdain or lay aſide the former. But
n it is neceſſary we diſtinguiſh aright, what
of Fear this is; not a ſervile and aſtoniſhing
ror of Mind, but ſuch as produces the excel-
Fruits ſo often attributed to it, when it is
that *by the fear of the Lord Men depart from* Prov. xvi.
; that this *is the beginning of Wiſdom, and a good* 6.
erſtanding *have they that do thereafter*; that *he* Pſal. cxi.
fears the Lord will do good, and *look well to his* 10.
s, and *prepare his Soul*, and *ſanctify the Lord God*
is *Heart*; and many other Paſſages of the like
ortance.

This is the Deſcription of that true Godly Fear,
requently enjoined, ſo highly commended by
Holy Ghoſt: That Fountain of Life, that Prin-
e of true ſaving Knowledge, that Mark and
fection of Religious Wiſdom, that precious

Pſal. cxii. 1. Gift of God, and Glory of a good Man. *Bleſſed the Man that feareth the Lord, he hath great delight in his Commandments*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*; and the S of *Sirach* among many other moſt deſirable A vantages of this Virtue, ſays; *Whoſo feareth* Eccleſ. i. 13. *Lord, it ſhall go well with him at the laſt, and* Pſal. xviii. xxxi. xxxiv. ciii. cxiv. *ſhall find favour in the day of his death*; in ſhort, ſ as theſe we are informed, that God is their R and ſure Refuge, that he hath laid up plente Goodneſs for them, that he pities, and is as ten of them, as the moſt affectionate Father is of own deareſt Children; and that God hath his E ever watchful for their Good, that he will h their Cry, and help them, and fulfil all their ſire. The want of this Diſpoſition is obſerved *David* to be the Root of the moſt bold and Pſal. x. 4. pious Extravagances: *The wicked is ſo proud, he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thou Thy judgments are far above out of his ſight, and t fore defieth he all his Enemies. He ſays in his h God hath forgotten; he hideth away his face, a will never ſee it. Wherefore ſhould the wicked pheme God, while he doth ſay in his heart, Tuſh, God careſt not for it?*

It is a great Diſhonour to Almighty God, muſt needs exaſperate him highly againſt us, we rob him of a Part of his Nature, and make that tame and eaſy Being, which would be th ſult of infinite Mercy without any Mixture o ſtice; and to live, as though the Judge of al Earth would never call us to an Account. W as he hath not only declared, that he will b Eccleſ. xii. 14. *us into judgment with every ſecret thing, whether good, or whether it be evil*; but hath likewiſe mated to us how ſtrict and critical that en Mat. xxv. Luke xvi. Luke xiii. Mat. xii. will be, by reſembling himſelf to a hard M who requires his own again with Uſury; reckons with every Steward, for the waſte he made of his Lord's Goods; who expects an

prove

ovement of all the labour and expence beſtowed on his Fig-tree; and who will juſtify or con-mn us, not by our Actions only, but by our y Words and Thoughts, and the hidden Things Virtue and Diſhoneſty.

In that Prophetick Complaint of *David*, which many Applications made of it to our bleſſed rd both by himſelf and his Apoſtles, we cannot ſonably doubt, but it was principally intended *Jeſus Chriſt*; we may take notice, that among Curſes and Calamities there denounced againſt Enemies of the Meſſias, (and ſuch are all wick-Perſons) there are theſe among many others. *their Eyes be darkned that they ſee not. Pour thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrath-anger take hold of them. Add iniquity unto their uity, and let them not come into thy righteouſ-s. Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Li-g, and not be written among the righteous.* I men-n this, to ſhew, that the greateſt Curſe God can upon thoſe he hates, next to the blotting them olutely out of the Book of Life, and conſigning n over irreverſibly to eternal Damnation, is ſuffering them to bind one Sin upon another, to go on ſecurely without being reſtrained by Conſideration of the Righteouſneſs and Juſtice Almighty God. And hence it is, that thoſe ines, which extend the Sin of the Holy Ghoſt ond that Caſe of which our Saviour ſpeaks, e placed Preſumption in the foremoſt Rank of e unpardonable Offences, which fall within this ſure. And, the Reaſon they give for looking n this to be a Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, is, it wilfully rejects and utterly defeats one of moſt powerful Means made uſe of by the Spirit God, for reclaiming and containing us in our y, which is the Dread of God's angry Juſtice n impenitent Sinners.

Pſa. lxix. 23, &c.

We may then, in my Apprehenſion, apply St. *Paul's* Argument, relating to the temporal Power of Civil Magiſtrates, to the Juſtice and eternal Vengeance of the great King and Judge of the whole World.

Rom. xiii. 3, 4. *Wilt thou not be afraid of the Power? do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain, but executeth wrath upon him that doth evil.* The only way to have a good Confidence and true Peace of Mind is to live well, that we ſhall not be under any juſt Apprehenſions of God's being angry with us. For

1 John iv. 18. St. *John* ſays, *Perfect Love caſteth out Fear*, that is, ſuch a Fear as haunts us with Expectations of Vengeance, and is a perpetual Torment to the Mind. But, if Men will ſtill perſiſt in their evil Habits, it is the moſt unreaſonable thing in the World, for ſuch to flatter themſelves, and live void of fear. For God frequently calls himſelf a juſt Judge; and theſe are not Words of Courſe and Form, not an empty Title, that ſignifies nothing; but ſuch a Character as he will be ſure to make good to the uttermoſt.

If this had been a Matter of ſo little Hazard and Importance, as too many ſecure People fondly perſuade themſelves; can we imagine, that St. *Peter* would ever have given that ſolemn Exhortation to the Converts to whom he addreſs'd his Epiſtle, *If ye call on the Father, who without reſpect of Perſons judgeth according to every Man's work, paſs the time of your ſojourning here in Fear?* Or would St. *Paul*

1 Pet. i. 17. Phil. ii. 12. have urged his *Philippians, to work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling?* I acknowledge that the Apoſtle does indeed in another Place repreſent this, as a Privilege peculiar to Chriſtians, that *God*

2 Tim. i. 7. *hath not given unto us the Spirit of Fear, but of Power and Love, and of a ſound Mind.* But the meaning of that and other Paſſages of like import is only this, That the Spirit of the Goſpel

t of the ſame ſervile Kind with that of the Law, here Men were dealt with like Servants; and Rom. viii. ear was the chief and governing Principle; for 15. hich Reaſon, this is elſewhere termed the *Spirit Bondage*; but ours is the *Spirit of Adoption*, and Gal. iv. 5. are treated like Sons. But what then? Is there Fear belonging to the Duty of Children? Yes rtainly, a filial Fear, mix'd with Love; and no s cautious of offending their Father, than the ve is of incurring the Diſpleaſure of the moſt ſolute and tyrannical Maſter. Only here is the fference, that theſe two Sorts of Perſons obey on different Motives; the one merely from Puhment, without Regard to the Perſon he ſerves, ther than all his Anger may be of miſchievous nſequence; the other, out of an affectionate verence for the Perſon obeyed, a grateful Senſe his great Goodneſs, and the Baſeneſs of doing y thing, which may give Diſguſt to one, who h ſhewed himſelf ſo bountiful and indulgent, d ought to have a more ſuitable Return made for Love.

So that the conſidering God and ourſelves un- the Capacity of Parent and Children, as it inates the Honour and Advantage of this ſpiriand moſt noble Relation, ſo does it likewiſe e another Turn and Temper to our Actions, and ders our Service chearful and delightful, and of Reverence and affectionate Deſire to pleaſe; a word, it qualifies our Fear with Love. This o doubt St. *Paul*'s Intention in that known Paſe, *You have not received the Spirit of Bondage* Rom. viii. *in to Fear; but ye have received the Spirit of* 15. *ption, whereby we cry Abba Father.* And conently, you have another and better Reaſon for g what God commands, than either the *Jews* t upon to their true God, or the Heathens to r falſe Gods, who, generally ſpeaking, only oured the Deity they adored, for fear it ſhould

hurt them if they did otherwiſe. This ſlaviſh Te
ror of Mind is therefore a Principle unfit for t
Dignity of a Chriſtian, who is admitted to ſo hi
a Relation, and ſuch glorious Proſpects; and
that ſervile Diſpoſition we are to underſtand the
Texts of the New Teſtament, which forbid us
ſerve God out of Fear. For the right Underſtan
ing whereof there are however two Things to
obſerved.

The *Firſt* is, that though this be a Spirit,
which we are not allowed to reſt finally, as
only and beſt Motive of a Chriſtian Obedienc
yet is it, not only a lawful, but exceeding uſe
Motive to ſet out upon, and ſuch as commo
is the firſt Conſideration, which awakens Sinn
to Repentance, and makes them look about the
Hence is it, with great Propriety of Expreſſi
termed, *The beginning of Wiſdom.* And theref
you find the old Prophets among the *Jews*, *Jon*
in his Embaſſy to the *Ninevites*, and *John Bapt*
to thoſe who reſorted to his Baptiſm, all of th
exciting hardned Sinners to Amendment, by
ting before them the imminent Dangers and
niſhments, which muſt otherwiſe overtake th
The conſtant Burden of all their Exhortations
in Effect the ſame with that in the Third
Mat. iii. 10. St. *Matthew*, *And now behold the Axe is laid t*
the Root of the Tree; every Tree therefore that br
eth not forth good Fruit is hewn down, and caſt
the Fire. But when Men are convinced of
Neceſſity of this Change, have entred in,
made ſome Progreſs, and are acquainted with
Ways of Holineſs; when they can look up
God, no longer as a provok'd Judge, but no
a reconciled Father and Friend; then they
the filial Affection growing and getting Grou
till at laſt they come to that Poſture of S
1 John iv. 18. meant by St. *John*, when he ſays, *perfect Love*
eth out Fear. Upon which St. *Auguſtin*'s Remark

hat *Fear is in the quality of a Servant, ſent before to make Way and fit up a Room for its Miſtreſs, Love, in the Hearts of them that ſerve God.* And, *when the Miſtreſs comes to take Poſſeſſion, the Servant having done his Buſineſs modeſtly retires. But where this Fear does not come at all, and open the Paſſage, there it is impoſſible for the Love of God to take up its dwelling.* *Tract.* 9. *in* 1 *Ep. Joan.*

The *Second* Thing fit to be obſerved upon this Occaſion is, that though Men very perfect are leſs ſenſible of this Fear than others, or have almoſt quite ſhook it off; yet it is ſo incorporated with their Love and Reverence for God, as to be exceeding profitable, and even neceſſary, for all Chriſtians, whoſe Life is not ſo perfect, nor Charity ſo fervent, as that mentioned by St. *John.* They were Men of no mean Character, to whom our bleſſed Saviour gave that direction, *Fear him, who after he hath killed the Body, hath Power to caſt both Body and Soul into Hell: yea, I ſay unto you, fear him.* And St. *Paul* to his *Corinthians* thought it no diſparagement to their Proficiency, to urge them upon this Motive to Obedience. *We muſt all appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad: Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we perſuade Men.* Nay, he is ſo far from ſuppoſing, that the Apprehenſions of this Kind were unworthy of thoſe new Converts, as even to declare, that he himſelf was not without ſome Concern leſt he ſhould miſcarry at laſt, and that he made this an Incentive to his Mortification and Perſeverance. For what elſe can we gather from that very remarkable Paſſage, *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection, leſt that by any Means when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away?* Luke xii. 5. 2 Cor. i. 10, 11. 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Since then that eminent Pattern of Chriſtian Perfection, St. *Paul* himſelf, notwithſtanding his great Prerogatives above common Believers, was

1 Cor. iv. not however wholly void of this awful Senſe o
God's Juſtice; ſince he, who declares he knew no
thing by himſelf, yet did not think he was there
by juſtified, but waited, with a becoming Humi
lity, for the Judgment of that Lord, who mu
finally pronounce upon him; what manner of Me
ought thoſe, to whom I am at preſent addreſſin
myſelf, to be? How very apprehenſive of the D
vine Vengeance, whoſe Conſciences reproach the
with ſo many, ſo grievous Offences; for whic
if they know any thing at all of Religion, the
muſt be convinced, that a very ſevere and exem
Eph. v. 5. plary Vengeance is due? *For this* (ſays St. *Paul* to the *Epheſians*) *ye know, that no Whoremonger, n unclean Perſon, nor covetous Man, who is an Idolate hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt, and God.* And immediately after, to drive this War ing deeper, and prevent that fatal Security, wi which either others who ſtrive to entice us to S or our own treacherous Hearts, by their own naug ty Suggeſtions, are exceeding apt to flatter us: I
Ver. 6, 7. adds, *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words; because of theſe things cometh the Wrath of God up the Children of Diſobedience. Be not ye therefore pa takers with them.*

It ſeems then, whoever they be, that would p ſuade us, that ſuch Practices as theſe would be p doned, and eaſily paſſed by; whoever relies up the Mercies of God for eſcaping the Puniſhm due to them; theſe Men deceive us, and if rely upon this Opinion, we build without a Foundation. They who commit ſuch Things Children of *Diſobedience*, or as the Word mig properly enough be rendered, Children of *Unbeli* For the great Occaſion of their acting in ſuch C tradiction to God's Commands, is the want o thorough Conviction and ſerious Senſe of his ſtice and his Threatnings. And hence they emboldened to proceed in a raſh Preſumption

on his Mercy; till at last they have provoked God beyond all Patience, and his Anger breaks out upon them, like a Fire not to be quenched, till it have utterly consumed them. The Apostle's Advice therefore in this Case is, not to *partake* with such Men in their Folly; not to act as they do, and, for the prevention of this, not to think as they do. But, to consider, that Anger and Judgment are with God, as well as Goodness and Mercy; that, if we will not fear these, while that may be profitable to our Reformation, we shall feel and perish under them, when it will be too late to amend. And I cannot conclude this Chapter better, than to desire every one of my Readers, that he would seriously lay to Heart the Apostle's Advice to these *Ephesians*, and make their Case his own; as it will most certainly be, in one respect or other. For either he will consider this Wrath of God, and come to a speedy Reformation for prevention of it, or else he will continue among the Children of Disobedience, incredulous and obstinate, refusing or deferring his Holy Purposes of Amendment, upon a vain Imagination, that God's Goodness is never to be wearied out with Provocations; and then that Wrath will most assuredly come upon him, to his utter Destruction of Body and Soul.

CHAP. VI. SECT. I.

A Sixth Impediment to a Holy Resolution, Deferring our Repentance out of a vain Hope of doing it to a better Advantage hereafter.

THE Reasons already urged for Repentance are so cogent, and the necessity of amending our Lives, at one time or other, so very apparent,

apparent, that few or none, who give themſelves leave to think at all, find it poſſible to evade them. But ſtill, as Men will never want ſome pretence againſt what they are loth to do, there is another Fallacy in this Matter, no leſs dangerous than any of the former. That, I mean, of putting off to a farther Day a work which even they who delay it, profeſs very heartily to intend, and firmly reſolve upon. But ſtill this Day is made longer and more diſtant, till at laſt Almighty God, in whoſe Hands all the Periods of our Time are, doth ſhut them out from any future Opportunities, and ſend ſuch Wretches to ſuffer the Pains of a miſerable Eternity in the next, who have abuſed the precious Talent of Time entruſted with them in this preſent World. Thus are Men frequently prevented, and overtaken with the Divine Juſtice, and have neither the Leiſure, they fondly promiſe to themſelves, for growing better, nor the Pardon of their paſt Offences, in conſideration of a bare Intention to forſake them. And it may very truly be affirmed, that more Souls periſh by this one Deceit, than by all the other Snares and Subtleties of the Devil beſides. He underſtands perfectly well, how nicely this Cheat is calculated; how likely to ſucceed; and therefore he plies it above another; and is content, People ſhould deſign well, provided he can but ſtave them off from putting thoſe Deſigns in Execution.

He conſiders much better, than we our ſelves are wont to do, of what fatal Conſequence Delays are in a Matter ſo abſolutely neceſſary, and of ſuch high Importance, as our Converſion and Salvation. He ſees, how one Sin makes way for, and draws on another, and a greater; that the Man who is not ready and fit to day, will be much leſs ſo to morrow; that Cuſtom gets ground, and grows into Nature; that inveterate Diſeaſes are not to be cured without much Difficulty, and very painful Application; that God withdraws

that Grace, which Men neglect to uſe, and without which they cannot reform; that his Juſtice and Truth are irrevocably engaged, for the Puniſhment of every Crime unrepented of, and that our Delays exaſperate and arm that Juſtice againſt ourſelves. He is duly ſenſible of the Hazards and Uncertainty of this frail Life of ours, how many ſurprizing and unſeen Accidents lie in wait, to deſtroy it every Day and Hour; how faſt the Obſtructions to do Good multiply upon us; and though we ſhould be ſpared, and be allowed Space, yet how wretchedly the Diſpoſition to repent will decay in us.

All theſe Things our Ghoſtly Enemy is thoroughly appriſed of. He gives theſe Reaſons their due Weight, though we do not: And the Arguments, which cannot prevail upon us to haſten our Converſion, move him effectually to find Means of protracting it. Men, that are Chriſtians at all, cannot be ſo blind, as not to ſee, that Repentance is eſtabliſhed as an indiſpenſible Condition of their Safety and Happineſs. And it is not hard for them to ſatisfy their own Conſciences, that the Objections and Difficulties in bar to a Religious Life, are by no means a Balance againſt the Advantages of it. It is therefore to little Purpoſe, to attack Men in a Way, ſo manifeſtly contrary to their own Reaſon. But he hath one Reſerve left, and takes Refuge in this Perſuaſion, to delay at laſt; he keeps theſe Truths from entring any farther than Speculation, and poſſeſſes Men with an Imagination, that ſome more favourable Opportunity will offer hereafter, for putting them in Practice. So that whatever Inconveniences they find at preſent, in changing their Courſe of Life, it is but having Patience and waiting a little longer, till they are gone off, and then they ſhall be able to become new Creatures, with all the Eaſe and Advantage imaginable.

This

This Cheat St. *Auguſtin* complains of from his own Experience. For after a full Conviction, that no Salvation was to be obtain'd without Amendment of Life, yet he was not free in ſetting about that Amendment. There was one, ever and anon ſuggeſting to him, *ſtay a little longer*, and *ſtay a little longer*, till at laſt he found there was no End of this Seducement: And when the Firſt, and Second Period was come, the ſame Importunity was renewed for a Third and a Fourth, and would have been ſo for ever, had he not taken up a noble Reſolution, fallen in with the Aſſiſtances of Grace, and manfully burſt through his Chains at once, with that moſt rational Reflection: *Why ſhould I ſay to morrow any more? What I am ſenſible muſt be done, why ſhould I not do it this very Inſtant?* And this indeed was the only Method of doing this great Affair with Succeſs.

Were we but willing to detect the Falacy and Danger of this Temptation, there would need no other Conſideration to manifeſt it to us, than only this; that whatever Objections we ſuppoſe to lie againſt our good Reſolutions and effectual Reformation at preſent, will not abate, but daily grow upon us and gather Strength by Delay. And conſequently, whatever Difficulty we may find in the Undertaking to diſcourage us now, Matters will be but the worſe, at any Time, that we can poſſibly propoſe to ourſelves hereafter. For,

1. The longer we continue in Sin, the greater will the Power of Cuſtom be upon us; and when once evil Habits come to plead Preſcription, it will be a hard Thing to overthrow them. In this I may appeal to every Man's own Experience, who hath made the Trial upon Drunkenneſs, or Uncleanneſs, or Swearing, or any other Sin, which he had long been accuſtomed to. And, if he found it ſo laborious an Attempt, to root out any old Vice throughly; let him from thence make a Judgment,

Judgnent how much Delays muſt needs add to the Difficulty of abandoning all Sorts of Vice, and becoming a new Man in every Point.

2. Again, Theſe Habits are to be vanquiſhed, only by the Aſſiſtance of God's Grace; and this is ſuſpended upon certain Conditions: One of which is, to be withdrawn from them, who do not improve it to the Purpoſes for which it was given. So that, by our deferring to change our wicked Courſes, we do not only increaſe the Difficulty, and cut ourſelves out every Day more and more Work to do, but we loſe the only Means of finiſhing that Work, and forfeit the Advantages, without which the Converſion we pretend to make, is ſo far from being rendred eaſier, that it becomes not ſo much as practicable.

3. And farther yet, as the Power of Grace abates, ſo does that of Sin; and the Dominion of the Tyrant and Enemy of Souls gains Ground upon us. He by degrees will enlarge and eſtabliſh his Uſurpation, till it advance into an arbitrary and abſolute Government, exceeding hard, and by our own proper Force, impoſſible to be diſpoſſeſſed again.

4. It is likewiſe to be remembred, that although we have by Nature a Principle of Freedom and Choice, yet is there not any Thing in the World more warped by degrees than the Will of Man: It tends ſtrongly to ſuch Things, as Cuſtom and frequent Repetition have left it inclining to. This is the Caſe, even in virtuous Actions, and good Diſpoſitions, where we go againſt the Grain of natural Corruptions: But in evil and vicious Cuſtoms, the Reaſon is a great deal ſtronger, becauſe here Cuſtom is ſeconded by Inclination. And therefore, they who abandon themſelves to the frequent Commiſſion of Sin, do go as far as it is poſſible to go, to fix this Will down to one Sort of Ob-

Object, and even extinguiſh the Privilege of chuſing in their Mind.

5. Nor is this the Unhappineſs of the Will only, but all our other intellectual Faculties are depraved and debauched by cuſtomary ſinning. The Underſtanding is darkned, and leſs capable of diſcerning; the Judgment is bribed and perverted, and leſs impartial in determining; the Affections have a more fatal Biaſs put upon them, and the Appetite is every Day more diſorderly and extravagant in its Motions and Deſires. In a word, all a Man's ſenſual Parts and Paſſions grow more heady and exorbitant, are more bold and mutinous, ſhake off the Yoke of Reaſon and Religion, and are more impatient of Reſtraint, the longer they are indulged, and connived at, in this Rebellion.

Let any Man now lay all theſe Things together, and then let him ſtate the Matter indifferently, and ſee whether he can ſuffer his Judgment to be ſo groſsly impoſed upon, as once to imagine, that it is more likely his good Reſolutions ſhould take better Effect hereafter, than they may do at preſent: Hereafter, I ſay, when Cuſtom ſhall have got more Power, and Sin have taken deeper Root; when the Devil ſhall have ſettled himſelf in his Poſſeſſion; when the Aſſiſtances and Recruits of Grace ſhall be drawn off, and the Man left to combat againſt a ſtronger Enemy, and with a leſs Force; when the Soul is more diſtempered, and the Infection hath ſpread itſelf through every Part; when the Judgment is depraved, the Will perverted, the Underſtanding muffled up, the good Inclinations grown cold and languiſhing; the Paſſions enflamed, the Body and its Senſes corrupted, the Strength ſpent, and all the Man in a general diſorder.

Do not we ſee by Experience, that the only Way to preſerve a leaky Ship, is to pump out the Water, and to clear the Hold, and ſtop the Leak

with

with all poſſible Speed? Do we not find, that the longer any Houſe is ſuffered to run to Ruin, the more Trouble and Expence it will coſt to repair it? Is it not evident, that the more Blows we give the Nail, the faſter hold it takes, and the more Pains muſt be taken to draw out again that which was ſo far driven in? And is not the Caſe the very ſame, when we bind one Sin upon another, and by Perſeverance ſuffer Vice to be ſo ſtrongly riveted into our Souls: And is not the Abſurdity as manifeſt, when Men thus aggravating their Miſery, do it upon a Pretence of finding eaſier Redreſs, when Matters are worſe with them?

This puts me in mind of a certain Emblematical Repreſentation of this Matter, related in an old Author by way of Viſion to a certain Hermit. The manner whereof is as follows; A Labourer was hewing Wood, and had made up a large Burthen, which he deſigned to carry off upon his Back: But, finding it too much for him to carry, he threw it down again, and heaped on a great deal more. Then he tried at it again, but feeling it now much more above his Strength than before; and falling into a Rage, he threw on twice the Quantity; hoping by this means, to make it at laſt portable. The Perſon, to whom this was repreſented, ſtood amazed at this wretched Man's Stupidity; till informed, that all that Figure was a moſt exact Image of the ſenſeleſs and ridiculous Behaviour of Sinners; Who, becauſe they are encountred with ſome uneaſineſs in getting quit of a few evil Habits at the beginning, put off their Repentance, and add to their own Burthen, by contracting a much deeper Guilt; and conſequently they draw upon themſelves the neceſſity of a much more laborious amendment, than their Circumſtances required, before this additional weight of Sin had rendred that more difficult, which they,

in

in deſpight of Reaſon and common Senſe, flattered themſelves with a vain thought of rendring more eaſy by this means.

St. *Auguſtin*, in his Expoſition of the Eleventh of St. *John*, takes notice, that in raiſing *Lazarus* from the Dead, our Saviour ſhews more Signs of Difficulty, and Vehemence of Effort, than in any other of his Miracles. He prays, he weeps, he groans, he is troubled in Spirit; and yet others he reſtored to Life with all the Eaſe imaginable, one ſingle, one authoritative Word. Now the Ground of the Difference is in the time of *Lazarus*'s continuing dead, he was buried, he had lain four Days, and Putrefaction had paſſed upon Him. Not after all, that even theſe extraordinary Circumſtances were any check upon Omnipotence, to which all things are equally poſſible, equally eaſy: But our Lord was pleaſed to uſe more Solemnity in this than in common Miracles, for the ſake of that myſtical Interpretation and Reſemblance it carries, to Men *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*. Who, when the four Degrees of ſinful Aggravations have paſſed upon them, when they delight in, conſent to, actually execute, and by frequent repetition habituate themſelves to, and long perſiſt in, Wickedneſs; When a Sinner, I ſay, is thus buried, and ſpiritual Corruption hath thus paſſed upon him; Such a one is with great Difficulty raiſed to Life again: And, whenever he is ſo, 'tis by moſt miraculous Mercy on God's part, and many Tears and Groans, and deep anguiſh of Spirit, on his own.

The Reaſon of this is obvious, and in Nature it cannot be otherwiſe. For the longer any Diſeaſe continues, the more obſtinate it grows; and cannot be removed, like a Sickneſs taken in time, and before the Maſs is vitiated. And, if this be ſo, what a Madneſs is it to put off Repentance and Amendment to old Age, or a Bed of Languiſhing; eſpecially when, beſides the prevalence of the Diſtemper,

emper, that very Age and Infirmity will add yet ore to the Difficulty and Hazard of the Cure? or if we think it grievous to repent now; to ft, and pray, to afflict our Souls, and mortify ur Bodies, in the Vigour of Youth, how ſhall we e able to do it, when Years or Impotence have ought us ſo low, that all we can do will ſcarce ffice to cheriſh and ſupport us? If, after two, three, or four Years Continuance, the Tor- nt of our ſinful Affections can hardly be reſiſted, w impetuous a Tide muſt we expect to bear wn upon us, after a twenty Years longer In- lgence? Would you not think that Traveller ſaken of common Senſe, who having a heavy ggage to carry, and choice of Horſes ſtrong d in good Caſe, ſhould make uſe of none of eſe, but lay his Load upon ſome poor, under- nbed jaded Beaſt, that can ſcarce carry itſelf? d yet that Man acts every whit as unreaſona- , that waſtes his Strength in Jollity, and reſerves laborious Part of his Life to that Condition, ich hath much ado to ſuſtain its own natural eakneſs.

But I have ſomething elſe of conſiderable Mo- nt to urge, beſides the Indiſcretion and extreme ly of ſo prepoſterous a Courſe. Think then, eſeech you, how manifeſtly unjuſt, how baſely grateful we are to Almighty God, from whom have already received ſo many and ſo valuable ſſings in hand, and pretend to expect ſo glo- s a Reward, as the Kingdom of Heaven here- r, to put him off with the leaſt, and laſt, and ſt Part of our Life; and to aſſign him only which it is very uncertain whether we ſhall have in our Power to pay. Think, whether who claims, and hath an undoubted Right to, deſerves, the Whole of our Time, will be fied with ſuch a wretched Remnant of it, ver it ſhould be at our own Diſpoſal. We

find God by his Prophet, declaring thoſe Me
accurſed, who when they have whole and four
Mal. i. Cattle, offer the *Blind* and the *Lame*, and reſer
that only for Sacrifice, which is good for nothi
elſe. And ſhall not we moſt juſtly fall under t
ſame Condemnation, if, while we have Plenty
Youth and Health, all this be ſquandred away
the Extravagance of our own Luſts, and nothi
but a feeble maimed old Age be devoted to
Service?

We find it forbidden in the Old Law to ha
two different Meaſures, the one, to ſell by t
Friend, the other, to an Enemy; the Iniquity
am now reproving, is yet more notorious. H
Men mete out their Lives by two moſt differ
and unequal Meaſures: They do it in Preju
to themſelves, and to their rightful Owner.
God, their beſt Friend, they allot the ſhort,
decrepit, the uncertain Seaſon of grey Ha
and feeble Limbs, and decayed Parts; to his
their own Enemy, the World, and the Devil, t
are liberal, nay, even profuſe, and give them
much greater, the better, the ſurer Meaſure
ſtout and robuſt Body, of ſprightly Wit, a
ſound Underſtanding. And how muſt this
be reſented by him, who declares a falſe
Prov. xi. lance an Abomination, and a true Weight his
light?

What Reaſon can the moſt partial Man in
World frame to himſelf, why God ſhould
this Uſage at our Hands; or if he would co
ſcend to take, why we ſhould offer it to him?
Colour of Juſtice or Equity is there, why,
the World, and the Fleſh, and the Devil,
we ſolemnly renounce at the inſtant of our
made Chriſtians, have had the beſt and choi
our Time, and our Pains, we ſhould think to
our old Bones, worn out with the Drudge
Sin, upon God, and have the Impudence to

im a Preſent of their Leavings? Muſt his Ene-
ies be regaled with the Wine, and can we find
our Heart to entertain him with only the Dregs
d laſt Droppings of the Veſſel? Do we not
now, that he reſerved the firſt of all Sacrifices for
e Altar; and what was the meaning of this Or-
inance, but, that God requires the very beſt of
hat we have, to be dedicated to his Uſe and Ser-
ce? Be wiſer then for ſhame, and follow that ad-
ce of the Preacher, *Remember now thy Creator in* Eccleſ. xii.
Days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, 1.
the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have
pleaſure in them.

But here again, Think once more, what will be
y Fate, if this time, which thou thus unjuſtly re-
rveſt for God, ſhould never come at all. Re-
ct with thy ſelf, how many thy own Eyes have
n cut off in the midſt of their Days, and ſurpri-
d with Death, before their Purpoſes of Refor-
ation came to any effect: How many Examples
another Kind canſt thou recollect; of Men who
ppoſed and promiſed to be wondrous Good,
en they grew Old, and yet, though ſuffered to
ive at that Age, were even then as little diſ-
ed to amend, and as ſolicitous to find out freſh
cuſes for putting the Day of Repentance ſtill
from them, as ever they were in the Heat
d Gaiety of Youth? How many unhappy Miſ-
ants have driven off this neceſſary Work, till
very Hour of Death; and when that Hour
w on, have ſhewed as little Signs of remembring
ir own Condition, as they did formerly in the
ſt perfect Health? Alas! there are too many,
o die no leſs like Brutes than they had lived all
ng; and, after forgetting God the reſt of their
e, forget themſelves as much in theſe laſt Mo-
nts. O would to God the Wickedneſs of the pre-
Age did not furniſh us with too frequent In-
ces of this fatal Stupidity! But the more of theſe

we ſee, the leſs excuſable ſhall we be at laſt, if the Miſery be not our Warning. One would be almo tempted to imagine, that the ſenſual and world Wretches, who live in ſuch open Defiance of Chriſtianity, had never heard of any other Place af this World, nor once been told of any Account be rendred of their Behaviour while in the Bod When they feel Death approach, they are ve nice and careful in making their Wills, in diſpo ſing of their Eſtates, as if theſe not being well ſett would affect them after they are gone: But wh ſhall become of their great, their only Treaſu their precious immortal Soul, they ſeem as li concerned as if in reality there were no ſuch thi And no doubt, as they die like Men of this P ſuaſion, ſo ſhall they live to all Eternity, ab doned to all thoſe Miſeries they expreſs'd no c cern to avoid, and deprived of all that Bliſs Glory, which they never thought it worth t while to be at any trouble to obtain.

But I have not done with this Argument e yet. I will put the very faireſt of the Caſe, ſetting aſide all the former Reaſons, (which I aſſure myſelf are unanſwerable) am content once to ſuppoſe, that the Buſineſs of Repent could be performed as eaſily, as conveniently certainly in old Age, or Sickneſſes, as it can b a more eaſy, or more vigorous Seaſon of our Li I will ſuppoſe too, that God will not fail to cept it, and make it effectual: Yet, even u theſe Terms, what Man in his Wits, who beli the Goſpel Covenant, would put things upon Iſſue? For do but conſider how much Time is loſt, how many Opportunities ſlipt, and many good Works omitted, which might have ded infinitely to the Value of our Service, and Degrees of our Happineſs. In Matters of wo Advantage, every one is eager to be in with foremoſt, and no one cares to ſtay for the r

the Market. If a wealthy City were to be ſack-
, no Soldier is ſo mortified to the Thoughts of
ooty, to let his Fellows plunder to Day, and take
with that little of the worſt of that Spoil, which
ll be left to Morrow. No prudent Man, that
ought to make his Fortune, would manage him-
f at this Rate. Now *the Kingdom of Heaven* (as Mat. xi.
r bleſſed Lord expreſſes it) *ſuffers violence, and* 12.
violent take it by force. The good and zealous
riſtians crowd in with a holy Emulation, and
ry one is eager to enrich himſelf with the beſt
the Spoil; that is, they labour by abounding
good Works here, to lay up and ſecure to them-
ves ſo much the greater Treaſure hereafter.
ey know that *according as every Man ſows, ſo*
ll be alſo reap; and therefore they loſe no time,
ſow plenteouſly, that they may reap plenteouſly.
d is it not a moſt wretched Folly, a moſt per-
ſe Negligence in us, to be contented with a
, when we may attain to a higher and bright-
Crown? Do we not pretend to think Heaven our
ppineſs, and ſhall we not labour to be as hap-
as poſſibly we can? *Now then*, as the Apoſtle
, *is the accepted time*; *now is the day of ſalva-* 2 Cor. vi.
. Now is the Seaſon of Fighting, if we would 2.
glorious Conquerors; now is the Time of taking
Spoil, if we deſire Treaſure in Heaven; now is
Sale of that Pearl of great Price, if we would
rove our ſelves wiſe Merchants; now is the
d-time, if we hope for a joyful Harveſt. If we
this time ſlip through our Fingers, our Lau-
will fade, our Sale will be over, our Booty
be taken out of our Hands, our Seaſon of Sow-
will be paſt: In a word, that Obſervation of
wiſe Man would do well to be applied to this
ter in a ſpiritual Senſe, *He that gathereth in* Prov. ii.
mer is a wiſe Son, but he that ſleepeth in Harveſt 6.
Son that cauſeth ſhame.

But, if this Conſideration have not its d
Weight neither, (and what Weight indeed oug
not a Conſideration to have, which concerns
Thing of infinite Importance, and a Doom irrev
cable to all Eternity?) Yet at leaſt, think ho
much a greater Debt thou contracteſt, and wh
freſh Obligations every Day entangle thee
when thy Converſion is deferred, and a larg
Arrear of Sin charged upon thy Conſcience. T
is tying Knots every Hour, and contriving n
Intricacies, which muſt one Day be all unrav
led again: 'Tis like loading thy Stomach w
Meat ſure to make thee ſick; and ſuch as muſt
diſgorged, or it will coſt thee thy Life. Thi
heaping together new Matter for Sorrow, for de
er Remorſe, for more confounding Shame;
doing that, which thou wouldeſt one Day g
the World it had never been done: 'Tis ſo,
mean allowing the beſt of the Caſe, that thou
repent before it be too late, and that God acc
thy Repentance; but otherwiſe Wo, eternal
to thee, for thou heapeſt up Wrath and Vengea
and Torments unſpeakable, upon thy poor
for ever and ever. But I ſay, ſuppoſing thou h
hereafter thoſe Offers of Grace renewed to t
which thou moſt ungratefully refuſeſt now;
this Laughter muſt be paid for in Abundanc
Tears; thy Heart muſt then bleed every Vei
it, for thoſe ſinful Pleaſures, in which it now
vels with ſuch a frantick Delight; and, if thou
not curſe the Day in which thou mighteſt h
repented, but wouldeſt not, thy Repentance
ſtand thee in no ſtead. This, if thou art a C
ſtian, thou knoweſt before-hand, and what a M
neſs is it then, deliberately and in cold Blood,
contrive ſo vaſt an increaſe to thy own Sorr
If thou think that God will pardon thee,
this Preſumption give thee Confidence to p
in offending him, what horrid Ingratitude is

to ſo gracious a Lord? If thou imagine there is no Forgiveneſs in ſtore for thee, what deſperate Foolhardineſs is this, thus to attempt thy everlaſting Ruin, by provoking a God, who is an Avenger of Evil, and whoſe Power ſo is unlimited, that he can puniſh thee at his Pleaſure, beyond what thou art able to think or fear?

So that let the Sinner put the Caſe any way, it will ſtill be againſt him. If he never repents, every Sin he commits is heaping freſh Fuel upon his own Head, and heating his Furnace ſeven times hotter than before. If he does, yet he muſt one day lament and be deeply afflicted for this very delay; and ſo he does a thing, which he muſt either periſh by, or moſt heartily wiſh undone again. The amends he endeavours to make by his Sorrow muſt bear proportion to the heinouſneſs and the number of his Sins, to the Power of his Habits, and the Length of his paſt wicked Courſes. And the deeper the Sore is, the deeper muſt be the Inciſion, and the more painful the Plaiſter that ſearches and cleanſes it from an inveterate Corruption. For it is not enough to leave our Sins, unleſs we do it with ſuch Marks of Humiliation and Contrition, as expreſs a juſt Indignation at our own Folly, as do in ſome Senſe execute the Puniſhment due to them upon our ſelves, and ſhew, that, were it in our Power, we are deſirous to make Satisfaction to that Goodneſs and Honour of God, which our Offences have injured and abuſed, according to the meaſure of thoſe Indignities we put upon him.

Thus a long Habit of Evil muſt have a long Repentance; a deep Guilt requires a deep Remorſe. And, would any Man of ſober Thought tear open his Wounds after this Manner, when he knows, that the Conſequence of enflaming them muſt be, to be healed with a ſharper Corroſive, and a more tedious Application? Can there in the World be

a more unnatural Cruelty, than thus to driv Thorns into our own Fleſh, which will be ſure t feſter; and if they do not gangrene and prove Mor tal, cannot however be drawn out again withou inſupportable Anguiſh? Should we not think tha Man fit for *Bedlam*, that, to gratify his Palate, woul drink of a poiſoned Cup, when he was fairly warn ed of the Ingredients before, and certainly convin ced, that a raging Fever will follow upon it; tha either his Life muſt pay for the Pleaſure, or hi Bowels be rackt and torn with infinite Torture t ſave it? If this be not Folly, if this be not Frenzy we are yet at a loſs what can deſerve to be calle ſo. And if this be not the true ſtating of the Sin ner's Caſe, who puts off his Repentance to a lon Day, in a vain Confidence of finding it more fo his Convenience, to enjoy the Delights of Sin i the mean while, and of repenting upon eaſier Term

Iſai. xlvi. 8. then, I appeal to every impartial Reader. *Remem ber this therefore, and ſhew your ſelves Men; call again to mind, O ye Tranſgreſſors.*

SECT. II.

The Example of the Thief pardoned upon the Croſs con ſidered. And the Doubtfulneſs of a Sinner's Conver ſion at his Death.

THE Sinner, there is little doubt, will not ye give up his treacherous Reaſonings for van quiſhed, having ſtill ſo fair, and, as he imagines ſo ſtrong a Refuge for his Delays in reſerve as the Example of the Penitent Thief, pardon ed at his laſt Hour upon the Croſs, and tran lated from thence into Paradiſe, to be with *Chri* in Bliſs that very Day; and this without all th painful Qualifications of ſuch a long and bitte Repentance, as, I have been ſaying, is the ver

beſt a Man can hope for, who hath continued all his Days in a State of Sin and Impenitence. This is an Inſtance, much in the obſervation and eſteem of Men who indulge wicked Habits. And we are ſure to hear it urged with great Confidence, in bar to the neceſſity of a ſpeedy Reformation, when we preſs ſuch to it. And without all diſpute, This is a Caſe, which may and ought to be matter of great Comfort to every Man, who finds himſelf reduced to his laſt Stake. Eſpecially when, as is uſual in ſuch Circumſtances, the Devil tempts them to deſpair of God's Mercy, and to give themſelves up for loſt, which it is not at any time fit for them to do. For the ſame God, who reſcued that great Malefactor from eternal Deſtruction at his laſt Hour, can likewiſe, nay and will ſave all them, who truly and ſincerely turn to him, though it be at their laſt Hour. But the great Misfortune is, that Men do not ſo much attend to the real Comforts which this Caſe affords, as ſtudy for, and flatter themſelves with falſe Ones, and ſo, by underſtanding and uſing this Paſſage amiſs, make that which ſhould encourage their Repentance, ſerve a quite contrary Purpoſe, and harden them in Impenitence.

For there are many things to be conſidered in order to ſet this Paſſage in its true Light, and informing us throughly, what Supports belong to us from it. As for Inſtance, Though many catch at this Example very greedily, and challenge a right in the Conſequences deduced from it; yet after all, This is but one particular Act of *Chriſt*, upon a particular Occaſion; and we have no expreſs Warrant given us from Scripture or Reaſon, for drawing it into a general Rule. How frequent a thing is it with Temporal Princes, now and then to extend Mercy to a condemned Malefactor, and to pardon him at the very Time and Place of Execution? And yet no Body argues ſo wildly

wildly from hence, as to ſuppoſe, that this gives every ſentenced Criminal a Right to depend upon the ſame Favour. Becauſe this is an extraordinary Act of free Grace, beſide the common Meaſures of Juſtice and Government, and neither ſhewed, nor promiſed to all the Subjects in general. Moreover, This Pardon of the penitent Thief was a ſpecial Miracle of Mercy, reſerved for the Manifeſtation of *Chriſt*'s Glory and Power to forgive Sins, to be thus exhibited, at a Seaſon of his loweſt Humiliation and Contempt.

Again, This Inſtance of Favour followed upon a ſingular and unparallel'd Confeſſion of *Chriſt* made by that Thief, at a Critical Juncture, when all the World beſides had forſaken our Lord, when the very Apoſtles themſelves either doubted, or at leaſt had for the preſent loſt all Perſuaſion, and Belief of his Divine Nature and Perfections.

Once more: This Confeſſion was at ſuch a time when that Thief had no opportunity of being Baptized, no ſpace left for common Repentance, and conſequently this unuſual Diſpenſation of Grace was neceſſary then, as the only means remaining to ſave a Man, who had done all that in his Circumſtances was poſſible to be done. And it is generally allowed, that of any Man, at his firſt Converſion, no more is required than a ſtedfaſt Faith, a hearty Sorrow for Sins paſt, and a ſincere Reſolution of living better for the future (if the Party be at Years of Diſcretion, and have committed actual Sins, and have longer to live) and from thence to proceed to Baptiſm, and the ordinary Methods of Salvation. So that the ſame Diſpoſition which qualifies others for the Goſpel-Covenant, and the regular Means of Grace, might qualify this Perſon, who had no room left for thoſe Means, for Heaven and Happineſs. But, that I may not ſeem to advance theſe Notions without ſufficient Authority, I ſhall deſire my Reader to obſerve how the moſt eminent

eminent and pious Saints have delivered their Opinions concerning this Matter.

St. *Auguſtin* particularly diſcourſes at large to this Purpoſe. Ser. 120. *de Temp.* "It is, ſays he, a muſt incurable "Evil, when a Man abandons himſelf to Vice, ſo "entirely, as to forget that God will call him to "an Account for his Actions. And the Reaſon "why I look upon this to be a deſperate Caſe is, "that a more grievous Puniſhment of Sin cannot "poſſibly fall upon us, than to be forſaken of all "Fear and Remembrance of the dreadful Judg-"ment to come. But, my beloved Brethren, to "prevent all Danger of Security and Remiſneſs "in this important Affair, which may ariſe from "the uncommon Happineſs of the Thief convert-"ed upon the Croſs; and that none of you may "wickedly reaſon thus in his own Heart, Why "ſhould my guilty Conſcience give me Trouble, "or the Wickedneſs of my profligate Life make "me afraid, when I ſee that Man's Sins were "all forgiven in a Moment? We muſt conſider, "not only how ſhort the Time of his Belief, and "how ſudden his Converſion was, but withal "how zealous his Devotion was, and how per-"fect his Faith, which exerted itſelf ſo vigo-"rouſly at a Time, when that even of the Juſt did "ſtagger and deſpond. Again, let them who de-"pend upon this Thief's Example, ſhew, that "they imitate his Example indeed; let them pro-"duce the ſame Evidences of their Belief, and "then I may allow them to promiſe themſelves "the ſame Grace and Happineſs. Alas! my "Friend, the Devil puts this Pretence of Security "into thy Head, that he may thereby work thy "Deſtruction. And it is much to be feared, "that innumerable Multitudes of unwary Souls "have periſhed upon a falſe Confidence in this "deceitful Hope. That Man deludes himſelf moſt "miſerably, and makes a Jeſt of Sin and eternal "Damna-

" Damnation, upon a vain Imagination, who thinks " that the Mercy of God will come into his Relief " at the laſt Moments of his Life. Nothing is " more provoking, more abominable in the Sight " of God, than for a Man to put no Reſtaint up- " on the Sins and Follies of his Youth, upon a " pretended Purpoſe of repenting, and making " Amends for all in Sickneſs or Old Age. This " happy Penitent, (and therefore happy, becauſe " he did not induſtriouſly lay Snares and Obſtru- " ctions in his own Way, but readily lay hold on " *Chriſt*, who is himſelf the *Way*) took Life by " Violence, as it were, and made infinite Advantage " of his own Death. He did not wilfully defer the " Time of Salvation; he did not, by a treacherous " Deceit, put the State of his Soul to all Eternity, " upon that ſingle Iſſue of his laſt Hour; he did " not obſtinately reſerve his Converſion to his dy- " ing Breath; he had not any Knowledge of *Chriſt* " or his Truth before that Time. For had he " had any, we may infer from his Behaviour, " that he who was firſt in the Kingdom of Hea- " ven, would not have been the laſt among the " Apoſtles."

Thus we ſee how far this Holy Father was from thinking, that this ſingle Inſtance was to be depended upon as an univerſal Standard for the Remiſſion of grievous Offenders; and upon what Grounds it was that he thought otherwiſe. Not from any Want of Readineſs in *Chriſt* to receive all Penitents according to his Promiſe: For this he does to every one, who truly turns to him, as gladly as he did it to this Thief. But in regard that every one is not in the ſame Circumſtances, nor hath the ſame Meaſure of Grace afforded him, nor the ſame Opportunities for repenting as he ought, at his laſt Hour; the general Method of proceeding is, that Men are dealt with according to their Works, and ſuch Sort of Perſons as they

chuſe

chuſe to live, ſuch God ſuffers them to die. *God ſpake once*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*, *and twice I have heard this, that Power belongeth unto God; alſo unto thee, O Lord, is Mercy, for thou rendreſt to every Man according to his Work.* And the Son of *Sirach*, *The way of Sinners is made plain with Stones, but at the end thereof is the Pit of Hell.* And St. *Paul* yet more plainly and fully; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatſoever a Man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap: For he that ſoweth to his Fleſh, ſhall of the Fleſh reap Corruption; but he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap Life everlaſting.* Here then is the univerſal Rule, and this is what we have to truſt to; that Men are to expect Good for Good, and Evil for Evil; and to perſuade ourſelves otherwiſe, and ſo depend upon irregular and extraordinary Methods in our Favour, is no better than thinking to mock God, and a moſt wretched cheating of our own ſelves.

Pſal. lxii. 11, 12.

Eccluſ xxi. 10.

Gal. vi. 7, 8.

But however, God hath not bound himſelf up ſo ſtrictly by this general Rule neither, that he ſhould not ſtill be at Liberty, as oft as he ſees fit, to give the Privilege of Repentance and Pardon to ſome particular Perſons, even at the laſt Gaſp. God is not barred, I ſay, by his own Law ſo as that he may not do this. But wretched is the Condition of that Soul, which hath no other Anchor of Hope, nothing left to determine her eternal Happineſs or Miſery, but this very doubtful and tickliſh Point, the bare Preſumption, that what he may do in ſome Caſes, he will certainly do in this Caſe. I call it a doubtful and a tickliſh Point, becauſe indeed all ſober and pious Chriſtians have conſtantly ſpoken and thought very dubiouſly concerning it. And though they do not abſolutely declare againſt a late and Death-bed Repentance, but leave it to the ſecret Judgment of God, as a Matter not ſafe, or poſſible, for Man to paſs a poſitive Sentence upon; yet they manifeſtly incline to the Negative

Side

Side of the Queſtion, and they bring ſuch Argu-ments for their Opinion, as muſt convince any rea-ſonable Man, that it is by no Means fit to betak-ourſelves to this laſt Remedy, when we have ſo many better and more in our Hands.

This is, without Diſpute, (as a learned *Caſuiſt* begins his Diſquiſition upon it) a Matter that mi-niſters more Ground of Fear to the Party concern-ed, than it does of Doubt to the Divine who un-dertakes to handle the Point. *Res eſt, quæ plus ti-moris, quam dubitationis affert.* Two Concluſion-the ſame Author lays down there, which canno-reaſonably be conteſted. The *Firſt* is, that ac-cording to the Promiſe made by God in *Ezekiel*

Sect. 22. *l.* 4. *Sent. q.* 19. *art.* 6.

Ezek. xviii. 27.

At what Time ſoever a Man turns truly to God from the Wickedneſs that he hath committed, he ſhall be gra-ciouſly accepted and pardoned. And not only ſo but he admits farther, that ſo long as God ſpares Man his Life, and the Uſe of his Senſes, it is no impoſſible, but that his Will may be ſo aſſiſted, an-powerfully wrought upon by God's Grace, tha-he may truly repent. But then he qualifies thi-Concluſion with a Second, which takes away a-Ground of carnal Security: Which is, that *th-late Repentance of a Man, who hath wilfully drive-it off to the very end of his Life, is by no means fit t-be depended upon; nor can it yield any great Aſſuranc-of Pardon, eſpecially to People, whoſe Lives for the ge-neral Courſe of them have been notoriouſly bad, excep-there be a very great and extraordinary Sorrow, an-ſome very evident Marks of the Sincerity of ſuch a Re-pentance.*

The Reaſons of this ſeemingly hard Sentence ar-obvious. For ſuch Mens Sins are loaded with ver-grievous Circumſtances; they have, by Cuſtom and Obſtinacy, heaped up to themſelves an in-credible Quantity of Wrath and Vengeance; the-have lived in Defiance of God and his Laws, deſpiſe-his Threatnings and Promiſes, ſet at nought hi-

Anger

Anger, abuſed his Patience, that waited long, and defeated his Goodneſs, that uſed great Variety of excellent Arts for their Amendment; they have by theſe Means render'd themſelves altogether unworthy of, and unqualified for that Grace, which is indiſpenſibly neceſſary to their Converſion. And therefore, all theſe Things conſider'd, there is a great deal of Reaſon to queſtion, whether the Appearances of Repentance at ſuch a Time be real, or but a Shew and empty Appearance only: Whether the Sorrow they expreſs be truly Sorrow for Sin, for having offended God, and behaved themſelves as they ought not; or whether it be the Sorrow of a hardened Malefactor dragged to Execution, who hath no manner of Concern for the Breach of the Laws, or the Injuſtice of his Fact, but only for the Puniſhment which he is juſt going to ſuffer for it.

To the ſame Effect another celebrated Divine ſays, "It is not eaſy to conceive, how that Repentance which comes ſo late as a Death-bed, "ſhould be a true Repentance. For when our Body through every Part is upon the Rack with "Pain, it is not eaſy for a Man to command his "Thoughts off from his Anguiſh to any other "Object. So that this kind of Converſion ſeems "rather to be the Effect of Force, than of free "Choice. And, though a Man in that Condition "may think himſelf ſincerely deſirous to forſake "his Sins, yet is it an eaſy Matter, even for the "Party concern'd, to be deceived in this Matter; "and to imagine that very Thing to be want of "Will, which is in Truth no more than want of "Power. He will be wicked no longer, only be-"cauſe he cannot. But, on the other Side, Things "within our Power are a proper Teſt to prove "the Bent of our Hearts; for if we do not that "which we might do, this is a plain Demonſtra-"tion that we have not the Will to do it.". Thus

Hug. *de S. Vict. Sacr. L. 2. p. 14. c. 5.*

that

that Author makes it a very queſtionable Thing whether a Death-bed Repentance be voluntary or conſtrained; which is but in other Words, to doubt whether it be barely poſſible, for ſuch to be accepted, and available for Pardon.

Obſerve St. *Auguſtin*'s Advice to the ſame Purpoſe. "When your laſt Sickneſs ſhall ſeize upon
"your Vitals, O how hard will ye find it to re-
"pent, and be ſorry for the Evils you have done,
"and ſhould not, and the Good you might, and
"ought to have done, but did not! And what
"do you think will make it ſo much harder then
"than at any other Time? This, no doubt, that
"the main Streſs of your Mind will be determined
"to that Part, whither the Main of your Grief
"draws it. And be well aſſured, a world of Ob-
"ſtructions will interpoſe, and take you off from
"the Work of Repentance, in that Seaſon of Pain
"and Languiſhing. Your Body will be full of
"Torture; Weakneſs and Decay will grow up-
"on you every Minute; Death will approach
"with his ghaſtly Form, and fill your Soul with
"Terror: The Family will be crowding about you
"to do their laſt Offices. And what a lamentable
"Look will Fathers caſt at thoſe Children, who
"have been always particularly dear, and perhaps
"for the inordinate Love of whom they have aban-
"doned themſelves to the World all their Days,
"and are now moving towards Hell upon their
"Account? When the Wife ſits weeping by the
"Bed-ſide, and Friends ſtand round comforting
"you, and theſe and the Man's own Inclinations
"flattering with Hopes of Recovery, and Phyſi-
"cians encouraging thoſe Hopes, how eaſy will it
"be for the Devil to diſſuade him from Repent-
"ance! Doſt thou attend, Chriſtian, to what I
"tell thee? Depend upon it, if thou doſt not,
"thy own ſad Experience ſhall ſhortly convince
"thee, that it is even ſo. Let me then prevail
"with

Aug *Ser.* 48. *ad Frat. in Eremo.*

with thee, to ſet about Repentance immediately, and make thy Peace with God or ever thou be ſick. Set thy Houſe in order, make thy Will, diſpatch all thy Affairs of Conſequence, while thou haſt Health and Leiſure, while thou canſt act without Confuſion, while thy Senſes are perfect, and thou art thy own Man. And happy ſure are they who take this good Advice."

Another preſſing the ſame Counſel, after a long and pathetical Exhortation, concludes in Terms that ought to ſtrike Terror, into all that delay this neceſſary Work: "He that leads a wicked Life, and will not think of Repentance till he is in danger of Death; as his Caſe with Regard to Damnation is dangerous to the laſt Degree, ſo is his Pardon doubtful. The only Way to be ſure of Pardon, when a Man dies, is to repent while he is in full Health. Some are too haſty in promiſing Security upon any the leaſt Signs of Repentance; but theſe are ſuch, as the Lord complains of by his Prophet *Jeremy*, *They have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my People ſlightly, ſaying, Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace.*" Thus he inſinuates, that a Death-bed Repentance cannot be ſure of a Pardon; becauſe we cannot be ſure, whether it be a true and ſufficient Repentance, or not. Iſidor. *de Sum. Bono*, c. 13.

To which we may add two other Reaſons of conſiderable Weight. *Firſt*, that though we could be certain of God's Acceptance at our laſt Hour, yet would it be a great Indignity to truſt to that, ſince God created us, not to ſin, and then aſk Forgiveneſs, but to *ſerve him in Righteouſneſs and Holineſs all the Days of our Life.* And conſequently, they that lead a wicked Life perform no Part of that Buſineſs, which God made, and ſent them into the World for. *Secondly*, Since we cannot love God in Holineſs, nor love, and honour him,

as we ought, otherwiſe than by Repentance an good Works; this Converſion lays ſo ſtrict a Obligation upon our Conſciences, that, every Hou we defer it, adds to the Degrees of our Guil and heaps freſh Wrath upon us. It is not neceſſa ry upon this Occaſion, to determine the preci Time, when this Obligation takes Place; but is moſt evident, it muſt needs oblige us ſoon than the Approach of Death. Since he who d fers it thus long muſt of neceſſity aggravate an multiply his own Offences, treaſure up an infini deal of Vengeance againſt himſelf, loſe all the O caſions of exerciſing holy Graces and good Work defeat the Intent of his Creation, enjoy no Bene of being a Chriſtian, and make himſelf daily mo and more a Veſſel of Wrath, and fitted for D ſtruction.

In a juſt Deteſtation of ſuch Obſtinacy and u worthy proceeding with Almighty God, St. C

Cypr. *Epiſt.* 55. *Edit. Oxon.*

prian pronounces that ſevere Sentence, "Th "*ſuch as* do not give Proof of their Repentan "by teſtifying their Grief for having offend "from the very Bottom of their Hearts, and ope "ly bewailing the Scandal their Miſdemean "have given, ſhould not be received into Co "munion, nor reconciled to the Church, if th "Marks of their Sorrow were not antecedent "their Sickneſs and Danger of Death: Beca "this is not an Act of free Remorſe, but a Mat "of Terror and Conſtraint; and it is by no mea "fit, that he ſhould receive Comfort when "comes to die, who never thought of Dea "till he was juſt upon the Brink of it." Al though the Rigor of this Judgment hath b ſomewhat moderated in the Practice of the Chur yet it ſhews us what a very mean Opinion h Men heretofore had of a Death-bed Repentanc

Serm. 57. *de Temp.*

and how doubtful they were of its Succeſs. St. *guſtin* particularly ſays, that a *ſick Man's Re*

ance is like himself, feeble and sick; and that of a lying Man, he fears is but dead and ineffectual. And again, *That Man is very far from a true Believer, who stays till old Age, before he will be prevailed upon to repent and become a new Man.* And how ought this to move us, how to disarm us of all our false Confidences, if Faith, the very first and fundamental Principle of a Christian, be not allowed to them that defer their Conversion to the latter Part of their Days?

But you will ask perhaps, what is to be done then, when a Man finds himself reduced to his last shifts, and not yet reconciled to God? Must he be down, and despair, and is there nothing left, no refuge for this Wretch to flee to? To this I answer, that he must do what he can, he must not despair even then, but remember what I have already delivered in the beginning of this Second Book. Let him reflect, that the Mercies of God are infinite; let him sue and most vehemently importune him for pardon; let him call in the Assistance of his spiritual Guides; and let his Diligence and Zeal be the greater, in Proportion as his Neglect and Impenitence have been longer; for if even his Repentance be hearty and sincere, there is no doubt, but God will accept it. For you may plainly see, that all the Difficulty the Authors already cited make, relates to the Sincerity of a late Repentance, and the impossibility of being fully satisfied in such Circumstances, that it is true Repentance. Which Point, because I know no body that hath stated more nicely than St. *Augustin*, I will here set down his Resolution of it at large. *Ch.* i.

"Every true Penitent (says he) that repents and then dies, loosed from the Bonds of that Captivity which separated him from *Christ*, rests in Peace. But if a Man in the Extremity of Sickness professes to repent, and depart in the Peace of the Church; I must own to you, *Hom.* 41, & 50.

" we cannot deny him that Reconciliation he de
" ſires, and yet we do not preſume neither, tha
" ſuch a one dies in a ſafe Condition. We d
" not preſume it; I tell you plainly. A tru
" Believer, that hath led a good Life, dies i
" Safety; a Man that dies immediately after hi
" Baptiſm, dies in Safety. He that repents and
" reconciled in Time of Health, and manifeſts h
" Integrity by a Courſe of holy Converſation afte
" wards, is ſafe when he dies. But he that pu
" off his Repentance and Reconciliation to the laſ
" though he have all the Formalities of a Reconc
" liation, I am not ſure that he dies in a ſa
" Condition. Where I am ſure, I ſpeak plainl
" and give Security; but where I am not, thoug
" I give Men Reconciliation to the Church,
" give them no Security of Peace with God. B
" here perhaps it may be ſaid, *If you that are*
" *Prieſt cannot tell, what State a Man, who repe*
" *at his Death only, is in after Death, nor can aſſu*
" *ſuch of Salvation, teach us, I beſeech you, how*
" *muſt live after Repentance, to be ſure of dying in*
" *ſafe Condition* I tell you how. Abſtain fro
" Drunkenneſs, from fleſhly Luſts, from Robbe
" and Injuſtice, from Lying and Evil-ſpeaking, fro
" inordinate Mirth, and from all thoſe Wor
" which Men muſt give an Account for in the D
" of Judgment. Some of theſe, I fear, are ma
" no great Conſcience of, and yet they are
" eſteemed great in the Sight of God, and deſt
" ctive to the Perſons who commit them. Th
" Things the Man muſt not only avoid, from
" Time of his laſt Reconciliation, but before, in
" full Health: For if he drive it off to the laſt,
" cannot tell whether God will allow him Space
" Repentance and Reconciliation, or not. The
" fore a Man ſhould live well before, and b
" ter after, his Repentance and Reconciliati
" —Obſerve what I ſay, for perhaps I ſhall do we
"

" to explain myſelf yet more particularly for fear
" of being miſunderſtood. What then? Do I pro-
" nounce that Man damned who repents at his
" death only? No, I do not. Do I then declare
" him ſaved? No, not that neither. What then?
" I confeſs I know nothing, preſume nothing, pro-
" miſe nothing in ſo doubtful and hazardous a Caſe.
" He that would put this Matter paſt a Doubt,
" muſt repent in time of Youth and Health. If
" this be done, and the Change made, and thou
" feel the Day of Death approaching, trim thy
" Lamp, make ready for thy Paſſage, receive the
" bleſſed Sacrament, and do the Offices of a pious
" Chriſtian, and thus thou art certainly ſafe. And
" why ſafe for this? Why for that very Reaſon,
" becauſe thou didſt repent at a time, when thou
" mighteſt have ſinned on longer. But if thou
" repent then only, when thou canſt ſin no longer,
" thou doſt not forſake Sin, but Sin forſakes thee.
" But you will aſk how I know whether God will
" forgive a Man at the laſt Hour or no? You put
" the Queſtion well; I do not know. For if I
" knew that Abſolution and the Sacrament would
" do a Man no manner of Good at his laſt Hour,
" I would not give them to him. And on the other
" hand, if I thought theſe alone ſufficient to ſecure
" his Salvation, I would not warn and terrify you
" in the ſolemn manner that I do. Either God
" pardons ſuch a Man or he does not; that one
" of theſe Two ſhall be I know, but whether
" of the Two ſhall be I do not know. And
" therefore a wiſe Man in this Caſe would repent
" while he may be ſure of Safety, lay hold on the
" Certainty, and have nothing to do with the Un-
" certainty."

And now let but any Man, that calls himſelf a
an or a Chriſtian, conſider this one Point. If
is Danger and the Dubiouſneſs of a late Repen-
nce be ſo great, upon ſuppoſition that a Man

do then Repent; What can we think muſt need become of all thoſe Wretches, who have either no Time, or not Ability, or not Inclination, or no Means, or not Grace to repent at all, when tha diſmal Hour overtakes them? What a horrib Thing is it to be cut off ſuddenly, to be ſtruck Dum with a Palſey, or ſenſeleſs in an Apoplexy, or fra tick in a raging Fever; to be abandoned by Go and continue raving, and blaſpheming, and plain wedded to Vice, to the very laſt Gaſp? In comp riſon of theſe a Death-Bed Penitent's Caſe is happ And yet, you ſee, All we can ſay for that is, th we may hope, but cannot promiſe. But for t reſt; We are ſo far from being able to promiſe, th the Goſpel affords not the leaſt Foundation, ev for Hope, or charitable Belief.

I leave this whole Diſcourſe upon my Read with thoſe Words of *Solomon*, which it were mu to be wiſhed were graven in deep indelible Cha ſters, in the Memory and Heart of every Sinn For ſure it muſt awaken him out of his profou Sleep to hear Almighty God threatning him af this manner, and ſtartle him to think, how he ſh bear the Accompliſhment of this Prophetick Cu upon him in his greateſt Extremity. *Becauſe I h*

Prov. i. 24,26,28. *called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my Ha and no Man regarded, I alſo will laugh at your Ca mity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Then ſ they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſ ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me.* O may never be found among the Number of thoſe, wh God will one Day thus upbraid, and even Triu and take Delight in their Ruin; but make haſte *ſeek him while he may be found, and call upon while he is near.* For *whoſo hearkneth to him, ſ*

Ver. 33. *dwell ſafely, and ſhall be quiet from fear of Evil.*

SEC

SECT. III.

Some Examples of Perſons who periſhed in their Impenitence; and pious Exhortations to ſpeedy Repentance.

IT is hard to ſay, what will prevail upon thoſe hardned Wretches, who are not moved with the Arguments already urged. And yet it is not fit any thing ſhould be left unattempted, for the removing ſo general and ſo fatal an Obſtruction, as this of delaying Repentance is, to mens everlaſting Salvation. I ſhall therefore, before I diſmiſs this Subject, try to make ſome profitable Impreſſion upon the Souls ſeduced by it, by repreſenting the diſmal Judgments of God upon ſome Impenitent Wretches, and the affectionate Exhortations of holy Men to a timely and effectual Repentance.

As to what reſpects the former of theſe Particulars, I ſhall confine myſelf to ſuch Examples, as the Holy Ghoſt hath, for our warning, left upon Record in Scripture; and theſe too ſuch as had, all of them, very loud and awakening Calls from God. *Herod* the Firſt had ſuch a Call by the Wiſemen, who came out of the Eaſt to *Jeruſalem*, in Matth. ii. ſearch for the *Meſſiah*, the new-born King of the *Jews*; but he was ſo far from hearkening to it, as by a moſt barbarous Murder of abundance of innocent Babes, to endeavour the Deſtruction of that wonderful Child, whom he ought indeed to have paid that Worſhip and Homage to, which he treacherouſly pretended to deſign. And for his obſtinate Cruelty God puniſhed him with a very ſad and unuſual kind of Death. *Herod the* Mark vi. *Tetrarch* had ſufficient warning given him by *John Baptiſt*, whoſe Preaching was ſo powerful, that it found a Paſſage to his Heart; he heard him gladly,

he did many Things in obedience to his Doctrine; but when the ſinful Cohabitation with his Brother's Wife came to be urged home upon his Conſcience, this coſt the Preacher his Head. And he again who was deſirous to ſee *Chriſt*, and ſome Miracle done by him, when this ended in reviling and ſetting him at nought, was caſt off by Almighty God, and that opportunity of Converſion turned to his heavier Condemnation. What an opportunity of Conviction and Repentance did God put into *Pilate*'s Hands, had he but been ſo happy to make a good uſe of it: He underſtood our Saviour's Innocence, and, by his own Examinations and Conferences with him, was fully ſatisfied in his own Breaſt, that he was a very extraordinary Perſon: He had warning from his Wife, not to have any thing to do with the Blood of that juſt Perſon, and declared to the People more than once, that he ought not to condemn him: and yet in deſpight of all theſe Checks, he ſtifled all the Impreſſions made upon his own Breaſt, gave Him up to the Barbarity of his Enemies, to whom he ought to have given up his own corrupt Heart; and was afterwards made an exemplary Sufferer, for that Popularity and Ambition, which had ſwayed him in crucifying our Bleſſed Lord, againſt the clear Teſtimony of his own Conſcience, and his own Mouth. *Felix*, one of his Succeſſors in the Government of *Judæa*, ſent often for St. *Paul* when he was his Priſoner, and conferred ſecretly with him, concerning the Faith of *Chriſt*. The Apoſtle know very well, what ſort of Application this Man's Diſeaſe required, and therefore took an Opportunity to diſcourſe one Day very particularly, upon *Righteouſneſs, and Temperance, and Judgment to come*; But he, like the Perſons we are now dealing with, was not for making preſent riddance, but ſent off the Preacher, and the Admonitions and Reproaches of his

Luke xxiii.

Mat. xxvi.

Acts xxiv. 25.

own

own Mind, till ſome more convenient Seaſon; which Seaſon never came, and ſo the matter was of no effect. How happy had *Pharaoh* been, if he had proſecuted thoſe Relentings, which his Heart often ſmote him with for his Wickedneſs? But, after all his Humiliations to *Moſes*, in the bitterneſs of his Diſtreſs, after ſo many Warnings and Confeſſions, and Proteſtations, *The Lord is Righteous, and I and my People are wicked*; no ſooner was the Plague removed, but he was for gaining more time, till at laſt the Vengeance of God glorified it ſelf upon this hardned dilatory Sinner; Who the longer he lived grew ſo much the worſe, that he might be ripe at laſt for Judgment without Mercy, who had ſo often, and ſo obſtinately ſtood out Proof again all the Methods of Mercy, (whether by way of Puniſhment or of Deliverance) which were made uſe of to ſoften and to reclaim him. Thus you find it was in thoſe Two moſt remarkable Judgments ſo often mentioned by our Bleſſed Saviour, the Deſtruction of the old World by a Flood, and that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* by Fire from Heaven: Neither wanted Calls and Warnings, nor ſpace for Amendment: To the former God gave a Hundred and Twenty Years notice; to the other, the Reproofs and Inſtructions of righteous *Lot*. But ſtill *they ate, they drank, they married, and were given in Marriage*, till the Flood in one Caſe, and the Fire in the other, ſwept them away to a ſad Eternity. And thus again it was, in that other diſmal Overthrow, ſo often foretold by our Lord upon *Jeruſalem*, and the Jewiſh Nation; never was ſuch a Calamity upon any Nation under Heaven. And why was this? But as I hinted before, becauſe *God had ſtretch'd forth his Hands all Day to a diſobedient and gainſaying People; he would have gathered them, and they would not, therefore their Houſe is left unto them deſolate.*

By

By all theſe, and by many more Inſtances, we may ſee that God deals with all Mankind, as himſelf declares in the Revelation, *Behold I ſtand at the Door and knock*; but if we will not open, what follows then! No other, than that Curſe upon the Idolatrous Church, *I gave her ſpace to repent, and ſhe would not repent; Therefore ſhall ſhe be caſt into great Tribulation.* He promiſes to knock and call; but he does not limit himſelf to any time, nor tells us how often he will call, or how long he will continue knocking. Nay even the Puniſhments inflicted for our obſtinacy in this World are ſo many freſh Knocks, and louder Calls; For it is a Favour, and a Privilege, to ſuffer here, rather than to be turned over to the Divine Juſtice hereafter. And therefore, when we pity thoſe that ſmart under the Rod of God for their Offences, in Sickneſs, or Poverty, or any other Temporal Afflictions; let us remember how much worſe it is with the proſperous and gay Sinner; with them, who are given over to a Reprobate Senſe; with them who are cut off in the midſt of their Wickedneſs, who might all have ſaved themſelves, had they not ſhifted off their Converſion, but taken up good Reſolutions preſently and effectually, when they felt the good Motions of the Holy Spirit awakening and importuning them to do ſo.

Rev. iii. 20.

Rev. ii. 21, 22.

I now proceed to the *Second* Thing propoſed, to lay before my Reader ſome of thoſe pious Exhortations to a timely Repentance, which Holy Men in all Ages have left behind them to this purpoſe. The firſt of theſe ſhall be taken from St. *Baſil*, who obſerves, "That this is the great Artifice of our adverſary the Devil, to perſuade us to devote to Day to his Service, and to Morrow to God's. And when that Morrow comes and is the preſent Day, he repeats the ſame Perſuaſion, upon the ſame Ground, becauſe

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" thy Eyes; when thou riſeſt in the Morning, be
" not ſecure of living till Night; and when thou
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" ragements. O how ſweet, how wonderful is the " Patience and Mercy of this Good God! But take " heed, O Man, that thou abuſe not this Goodneſs. " He deſigns by this to bring thee to a Change of " Life; And ſtill thou cryeſt, *It is no matter to day,* " *to Morrow I will conſider of it*; and when to Mor- " row comes, *Well, 'tis time enough yet, another day* " *will do as well*; and thus thou trifleſt away the " day of Grace, till the Wrath of God ruſh upon " thee unawares, and thou periſh by his Juſtice, " whoſe Kindneſs thou haſt deſpiſed." The ſame Author applies the Parable of the Labourers hired into the Vineyard, to the different Seaſons and Methods of calling Men into God's Service; Some are taken in their Infancy, ſome in their Youth, ſome again in their more confirmed Years, ſome in old Age, and others juſt at the end of their Lives.

De Verb. Dom. ap Joan. Ser. 59.

" Hearken then, ſays he, my Brethren, I beſeech " you, and let none of you loiter, or delay his " coming into the Vineyard, upon a Pretence, " that let him come when he will, the Penny ſhall " be Good to him. For though it be true, that " every Labourer ſhall have his Hire, yet will not " this bear any Man out in declining to labour. Did " any of thoſe who were called at the Firſt and " Third Hours, bid the Husbandman wait for " them till the Sixth, or Ninth, or Eleventh? Come " therefore as ſoon as thou art called, becauſe thou " knoweſt the Reward is promiſed to all, but all " are not promiſed to be taken in, when they pleaſe. " If thou art called at the Sixth Hour, make haſte, " for thou canſt not tell, whether thou ſhalt live " to the Seventh. For why ſhouldſt thou put off " the Houſholder that calls thee, ſince thou art " ſure of the Reward upon thy compliance, but " not ſure that he will allow thee another Hour " to come in at? Take heed then, leſt by delay thou " deprive thy ſelf of that Recompence, which " his Promiſe hath given thee a Title to, provi-

" ded

" ded thou come when thou art called." And a little after he anſwers that Excuſe which the negligent and idle are uſed to frame to themſelves from that Paſſage in *Ezekiel*, that *At what time ſoever a Man ſhall turn from his Wickedneſs, he ſhall ſave his Soul alive.* " If God will be merciful at any time, ſays " the Worldling, why may not I be as well con- " verted to Morrow as to Day? No, ſays St. *Au-* " *guſtin*, Thou ſayeſt thou wilt put an end to thy " Wickedneſs to Morrow; but how art thou aſſu- " red that God will not put an end to thy Life be- " fore to Morrow? Thou haſt reaſon in taking " Comfort, that God hath promiſed thee Forgive- " neſs, whenever thou ſhalt repent; but hath God " any where promiſed, that he will give thee long- " er time to repent in?" The wiſe Man adviſes to *make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and not to put off from day to day, becauſe Wrath as well as Mercy are from him, and he will deſtroy Sinners in their Security.* Eccluſ. v. 5, 6, 7. " Let not thy Delay then ſhut that Door againſt thee, which God hath opened. Behold " the giver of Pardon opens to thee, and wilt thou " not come in? Thou wouldſt have thought it a " mighty Mercy, if he had opened when thou hadſt " knock'd, but he hath opened, without thy knock- " ing, and wilt thou ſtill remain without?" The " Scripture ſays, *Do not ſay to thy Neighbour go, and come again, and to morrow I will give thee, when thou haſt it by thee.* Prov. iii. 28. " We muſt not delay Mercy to others, " and ſhall we be guilty of the cruelleſt delay to " our ſelves? We muſt not defer our Alms, and " ſhall we defer the Pardon of our Sins? Be mer- " ciful to thy own Soul, Man, and do not put off " when thou haſt it by thee. Nay, here thou need- " eſt not, thou doſt not give thy own, it is only " required, that thou do not refuſe what is offered; " the beſt and greateſt Charity; remiſſion of all " thy Offences, which by ſpeedy Repentance thou " may'ſt give to thy needy Soul, but by unkind de-

" lays

" lays thou wilt certainly loſe and evacuate." And ſure that Man is very barbarous to himſelf, upon whom this Argument makes no Impreſſion.

I ſhall enlarge a little more upon the danger of this delay, by conſidering, with St. *Gregory*, how Sins unrepented draw Men into Perdition. For, as *Seneca* hath very judiciouſly obſerved, there is this remarkable Difference between the Sickneſſes of the Soul, and thoſe of the Body: That the Bodily, the greater they are, the more painful and ſenſible they are; But thoſe of the Mind, the greater they are, the leſs they are felt, and complained of: Becauſe 'tis the Nature of theſe Diſeaſes to ſtupify the Man, and abate the Senſe of his Danger. So that habitual Sinners by degrees come to be ſo hardened, as in time to commit the blackeſt and moſt notorious Crimes, without any Scruple or remorſe of Conſcience at all. And how this comes to paſs, not only from the nature of the Thing, but by the juſt Judgment of Almighty God, St. *Gregory* hath informed us by the following Paſ-

Moral. *l.* 25. c. 9. ſage. " Every Sin which is not ſpeedily purged by " Repentance, is either the Cauſe or the Puniſh- " ment of another Sin. For every unrepented Sin " does naturally, and as it were by its own weight, " draw us down into the Commiſſion of another; " and ſo, is not only a Sin itſelf, but the Cauſe of " a following Sin, and that following Sin again ſo " cauſed by the Firſt, is not only a Sin itſelf, but " the Puniſhment of the former Sin. It being juſt " and uſual with God, ſo to harden, and to blind " the Heart of a Sinner, that by the Demerit of " one ſin he is permitted to fall into another, and " ſo to bind ſin upon ſin. And as the foregoing ſin " is uſually from Malice and Obſtinacy, ſo the latter " proceeds often from Ignorance and Inſenſibility, " inflicted as a Puniſhment of the foregoing. Now " in regard that in the former of theſe, which is " both a ſin, and the cauſe of ſin, the Man acted in

" contra-

" contradiction to his Knowledge, and Conſci-
" ence: In the latter, which are ſins, and the Pu-
" niſhment of ſins, God permits him to loſe the
" Light of Knowledge, and the remorſe of Con-
" ſcience, which by tranſgreſſing againſt before,
" he hath provoked God to conceal from him
" that Precipice, into which he is now falling un-
" wittingly, becauſe he would not avoid it, when
" his Eyes were open, and he did ſee it before:
" That ſo ſin may be puniſhed with ſin, and by
" the moſt dreadful of all Judgments, be made
" both the Increaſe, and the Scourge of itſelf.
" To this effect the Apoſtle takes notice of the
" *Jews* continuing in their Obſtinacy and Cruelty,
" that *they might fill up their ſins always*; and our 1 Theſ. ii. 16.
" Lord in his Indignation ſays, *he that is unjuſt*, Rev. xxii. 11.
" *let him be unjuſt ſtill, and he that is filthy let him be*
" *filthy ſtill.* Theſe Men then, who defer their
" Repentance, have already given God Provoca-
" tion ſufficient to damn them; but yet their Sin
" is ſuffered to grow, that they may receive the
" greater Damnation. Their firſt Sin which was the
" cauſe of ſin, deſerved Puniſhment, but God does
" not puniſh preſently, that, if they will not take
" Warning, their following ſins, which are puniſh-
" ments of the former, may add to the Number
" of their Stripes, and mighty Sinners may be migh-
" tily tormented."

St. *Auguſtine* once more expoſtulates the Caſe thus; " You will ſay, perhaps, I am but young yet, *De honeſt. mulier.*
" and therefore I will indulge myſelf in Pleaſure
" for a while, and after that I will repent. Which
" is juſt as if a Man ſhould ſay, I will run a Sword
" through my Body, and then ſend for a Surgeon
" to cure me. Alas! poor Wretch, little doſt thou
" think, that a Wound is received in an inſtant,
" which cannot be healed but by long time, and
" acute Pain, and the Part ſcarce ever reſtored to
" its primitive Strength again. When a Man
" then

" then commits a grievous Sin upon purpoſe, or " rather Preſumption of repenting afterwards, " Why does he not reflect upon the many Diſ- " eaſes, the many, (even deſpiſed) Accidents, " that may come between and cut him off by a " ſudden unexpected Death, and make his Tem- " poral Delay to involve him in everlaſting Dam- " nation?" There are two Extremes, by which Men are injurious to the Juſtice and the Mercy of God, both which God hath taken ſufficient Care to prevent. " To the intent Deſpair might harden " no Man in a wicked Courſe, he hath marked " out to us the ſure Port of Pardon and Mercy " for all Penitents to make to. And, that none " might delay his Repentance by Preſumption, " he hath made the day of every Man's Death " uncertain: Thus are both Inconveniences pro- " vided againſt, the Sorrowful Sinner comforted, " and the Negligent and Dilatory terrified. Do " not then deſpair, becauſe thou art promiſed " Forgiveneſs: But do not be ſecure neither, be- " cauſe God hath not promiſed, that he, who de- " lays his Repentance, ſhall live to be forgiven. " Some Men ſin by Want, and others by Exceſs of " Hope; Both are in dangerous Circumſtances. " Wo to them that deſpair! Wo to them that " preſume! Wo to them both! Becauſe both neg- " lect to repent. God is Maſter of his own time " and favours; now he calls, now he importunes, " now he waits for thy Converſion; but if thou " ſlip this time, and weary out his Patience; the " ſeaſon of Judgment approaches, and then will he " render unto thee according to thy evil Deeds." There were no End indeed of repreſenting to my Reader all that might be collected upon this Occaſion. But, I hope, that little in compariſon, which he finds here, will, both for the weight of the Reaſons, and the Authority of the Perſons, have ſo much Credit with him, as to put him upon ſpeedy

In Pſal. cii.

ſpeedy Amendment, without which he runs ſo ma-
nifeſt a Hazard of his own Salvation.

CHAP. VII. SECT. I.

Some other Obſtructions to holy Reſolution, Sloth, Negligence, and Hardneſs of Heart.

WEre it poſſible to deſcend into the Hearts of wicked Men, and diſcern all the lurking Corruptions there, many Impediments no doubt might be diſcovered, which have not been, and ſome which could not be, particularly inſiſted upon in this Treatiſe. And happy were it for my Reader, if all the Hindrances in ſo important an Affair could be diſtinctly handled; becauſe to Perſons of Probity, and an ingenuous Temper, it happens very often, that the very Knowledge of the Diſeaſe is a great ſtep towards the Cure. But *three* there are however mentioned in the Title of this Chapter, too manifeſt to eſcape Obſervation, and of ſo great Affinity, that I cannot think it improper to treat of them together.

SECT. II.

Of Sloth.

THE *Firſt* of theſe is Sloth. A great and common Hindrance, eſpecially to tender and delicate People, who have long uſed themſelves to, or been educated in, Eaſe and Idleneſs: And therefore theſe tell you, they are not cut out for taking Pains, or enduring Hardſhip, though their Inclinations to Religion, if you pleaſe to believe them, are as good and as ſincere as any Perſons

whatſoever. Theſe Men will make no Difficulty to own, that all, which hath been, or can be ſaid upon this Occaſion is true; and they wiſh with all their Hearts, they were in a Condition to practiſe it. But alas! They have a nice Conſtitution, and very imperfect Health: Faſting, and Praying, and going conſtantly to Church, are things their Bodies cannot bear; and the Time which others employ in theſe holy Exerciſes, they muſt be content to give to Indulgence, and Diverſions, to Play and Company; for, ſhould they abridge themſelves of theſe Recreations, they ſhould be quite devoured with Melancholy, and loſe all the Comfort of Life. And therefore, ſince they cannot do what they would, they make no doubt, but God will accept their good Deſires, and not require Performances, of which they are not capable.

To ſuch as theſe I would recommend a ſerious Conſideration of theſe few Paſſages in Scripture.

Prov. xiii. 4 and xxi. 25, 26. and xxii. 13. *The ſoul of the ſluggard deſireth, and hath nothing but the ſoul of the diligent ſhall be made fat. The deſire of the ſlothful killeth him, for his hands refuſeth to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous doth good and ceaſeth not. The ſlothful man ſaith, there is a Lyon in the way, I ſhall be ſlain in the ſtreets.*

Mat. xxv. 26, 27, 28, 30. *Thou wicked and ſlothful ſervant, thou knewеſt that I reap where I ſowed not, and gather where I have not ſtrawed: Thou oughteſt therefore to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I ſhould have received my own with Uſury. Take therefore the Talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten Talents; and caſt the unprofitable Servant into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.*

Mat. xxi. The Fig-tree, which our bleſſed Lord found full of Leaves without Fruit, is the Emblem of good Deſires and Intentions without effect. And they who reſemble it in this Condition, will as certainly be one Day partakers of its Curſe.

From this evil Diſpoſition proceed many very pernicious Qualities and Effects. Such is that Spiritual Drowſineſs of Mind, which our Saviour commands all his Diſciples to ſhake off when he calls upon them to *watch and pray*; and St. *Paul*, when he rouzes his *Epheſians*, with that Alluſion to *Iſaiah*'s Prophecy, *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light.* And yet this Heavineſs is not an univerſal Stupidity neither, but that their Apprehenſions can be as quick, and their Endeavours as active upon the Affairs of this World, as thoſe of other Men. Like the ungrateful Wretches in the Parable, they are intent upon their Farms, and their Yokes of Oxen, and can talk as ſhrewdly, and manage as providently upon theſe Occaſions, as one would wiſh: But if you come to argue with them upon the Subject of Salvation, and urge them to Induſtry in ſecuring an Inheritance eternal in the Heavens; this is all loſt upon them. They have no Ears to hear, but are in a Dream as it were. This is a Sort of Employment much againſt the Grain, and they who ſubmit to any Trouble, tho' never ſo laborious, for temporal Advantages; think none too little or too late, for ſuch as are everlaſting. And thus they doze and trifle out their Lives till at laſt the Doom read by *Solomon* overtakes theſe ſpiritual Drones too. *How long wilt thou ſleep, O ſluggard? when wilt thou ariſe out of thy ſleep? Yet a little ſleep, a little ſlumber, a little folding of the hands to ſleep; ſo ſhall thy Poverty come, as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed Man.*

Mark xiii.

Eph. v. 14.

Prov. vi. 9, 10, 11.

A *Second* ill Effect of this Sloth, hinted at already, is an unreaſonable fear of taking Pains, and a repreſenting to ones ſelf Matters more difficult and impracticable, than in reality they are. Theſe like the Perſons ſpoken of by the *Pſalmiſt*, *are afraid there, where no fear is*: They frame to themſelves frightful Images of the Service of Almighty

Pſal. liii.

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To such as these I would recommend a serious Consideration of these few Passages in Scripture.

Prov. xiii. 4 and xxi. 25, 26. and xxii. 13. *The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuseth to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous doth good and ceaseth not. The slothful man saith, there is a Lyon in the way, I shall be slain in the streets.*

Mat. xxv. 26, 27, 28, 30. *Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with Usury. Take therefore the Talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten Talents; and cast the unprofitable Servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.*

Mat. xxi. The Fig-tree, which our blessed Lord found full of Leaves without Fruit, is the Emblem of good Desires and Intentions without effect. And they who resemble it in this Condition, will as certainly be one Day partakers of its Curse.

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God, the insupportable Hardships attending it, and the Dangers and Inconveniencies it would expose them to. As that Fasting would ruin their Constitution; Going to Church would give them Colds; Receiving the Sacrament would restrain them from all the Liberties, that give a relish to Conversation; Taking an Account of their Sins frequently would kill them with Sorrow, and perpetual Dissatisfaction. And a thousand other extravagant Pretences there are, alledged against that Service, which in truth is perfect Freedom; and in prejudice to him, who commands Men to *serve him with gladness*, and bids the *righteous be of a merry heart*. All which are in truth but so many fantastical *Lions* in the way, Excuses contrived to cover that Sloth, which first puts Men upon inventing them.

Psal. c. and xxxii.

A *Third* unhappy Effect of this Temper is Cowardice, and being discouraged with every little rub Men find in the way to Virtue. Which is so contrary to that Bravery and Magnanimity required of good Men, that nothing can more indispose them for the Perfection of a Christian Obedience. And yet, to see the Perverseness of Human Nature these very People are not beaten off from Vice, by the much greater Inconveniencies that attend it. When yet, it is even demonstrable, that the Ways of Piety are the less rugged of the two: And all the Difficulties which Almighty God hath thought fit to encumber our Duty with, that so he might put us upon giving some Proofs that we love him, when we chuse to do and endure something ungrateful to Flesh and Blood for his sake, are much more tolerable, than the heavy Burthen we voluntarily load our selves with, by continuing in the Habits, and under the Dominion of Sin. All the Sufferings of self-denial, subduing and governing our Passions not being comparable to the Torment of living under the Tyranny of any one of them.

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The *Fourth* Effect I ſhall mention is, that liſtleſſneſs, and unſteadineſs of Mind which drives Men off from going effectually about even thoſe very things, which they profeſs to be ſatisfied in, and to intend, and reſolve upon. And thus we ſee Multitudes that talk much off amending their Lives, and ſometimes conſult their ſpiritual Guides in the Caſe, and pretend to receive their Directions with a great deal of Zeal, and go away highly ſatisfied, and yet after all this, do nothing. This is very elegantly expreſſed by *Solomon*, *As a door turneth upon his Hinges, ſo doth the ſlothful upon his Bed.* He is ſometimes in Motion, but like that Door he only moves backwards and forwards, makes no advance, nor ſtirs from his Place, but is, after all, juſt where he was at firſt. He cannot find in his Heart to do even the eaſieſt Things, no not upon the moſt neceſſary Occaſions. For that ſeems to be the Importance of that other Obſervation made by the ſame Author, *A ſlothful man hideth his hand in his boſom, and will not ſo much as bring it to his mouth.* Prov. xxvi. 14. Prov. xix. 24.

Many other very deteſtable Effects of this vicious Diſpoſition might be inſtanced in; but I have ſingled out theſe, becauſe they are the moſt effectual bar to holy Reſolutions, and a vigorous Piety. For what good is poſſible to be done upon a Wretch, that is ſunk into ſuch a ſtupid Inſenſibility, as not to receive any Impreſſions from all that can be urged to him concerning his Soul and a future State? What can be expected from a fanciful timorous Creature, who ſtumbles at every Straw, and ſcares himſelf with imaginary Dangers and Difficulties, which have no Being, but what his own ſick Brain gives them? What poſſibility is there of bringing ſuch to run the Courſe, to fight the good Fight, to be at Pains about reducing their inordinate Luſts and Appetites into Subjection, and to beat down the ſtrong Holds of Sin and Satan; who are ſo miſerably

ſerably irreſolute, ſo ſcandalouſly lazy, as never to bear any the moſt profitable, the moſt neceſſary Trouble, or ſo much as to be conſiſtent with their own Thoughts and Intentions, one poor half Day together?

If there be any way left to take off this horrible hindrance to Salvation and a good Life, I ſhould think it muſt be, by prevailing with theſe Men, to reflect ſeriouſly upon the Labours and Sufferings ſuſtained by the Son of God for their ſakes; upon the indefatigable Pains of the Apoſtles, and other eminent Saints; upon the earneſt Exhortations addreſt to every Chriſtian, to *give all diligence to make his calling and election ſure*; *to work out his Salvation with fear and trembling*; *to take earneſt heed, leſt a promiſe being made us of entring into God's reſt, any of us ſhould come ſhort of it*; upon the terrible Threatnings denounced againſt them, who refuſe to qualify themſelves, and think the Benefits of the Goſpel not worth their Pains; upon the Nature of our preſent Condition, a Condition of Tryal and Diſcipline, and Warfare, and conſequently ſuch as requires labour, and fatigue, ſuffering and hard ſtriving, in them who hope to obtain the Crown; upon the Glories and Advantages of that Crown it ſelf, and the inexpreſſible, the inſupportable Miſery of them, who baſely give out, and loſe it through their own Default. And laſtly, that theſe Men would conſider, that no Life of any Sort can be without ſome Trouble; that they would fairly compute, and balance the preſent Inconveniences of a ſinful Life, againſt the lighter Weight of Cares and Troubles attending a good one: But eſpecially, that they would think a little, how theſe Bodies of theirs, pretended to be too tender for the Duties of Religion here, will be able to dwell with everlaſting Burnings, and be tormented beyond all Meaſure hereafter.

2 Pet. i. 10.
Phil. ii. 12.
Heb. iv. 1.

All this is an Argument calculated from their own Principle, and perſuades them to ſpare themſelves to conſult their own eaſe, and by a ſhort, (a very ſhort) induſtrious and active Care, to make ſure Proviſion for a durable and ever-during Reſt. For this Life is the time allowed us to ſecure Heaven in, and by the ſeveral Parabolical Alluſions in Scripture, 'tis therefore termed, the Market to buy in, the Battel to combat in, the Winter to ſow our Corn in, the Day to work in. He that loſes this Market, can never retrieve it more; he that ſhrinks in this Battel, is diſgraced for ever, and treated as a Deſerter; He that lets this Seed-time ſlip, muſt want in Harveſt, and beg when there ſhall be none to give to him; He that works not the Works of him that ſent him while it is Day, ſhall be caſt into utter Darkneſs. Suffer me then to apply to theſe Sluggards, that Advice of the wiſe Man, in a more exalted and ſpiritual Senſe, and may they receive it as a neceſſary Admonition, how all thoſe muſt behave themſelves in this, who hope to eſcape Miſery and the very extremity of Want and Diſcomfort in the next World: *Go to,* Prov. vi. *my Son, and deliver thyſelf; give not ſleep to thy Eyes, nor ſlumber to thy Eye-lids; deliver thy ſelf as a Roe from the hand of the Hunter, and as a Bird from the ſnare of the Fowler. Go to the Ant, thou ſluggard, conſider her ways, and be wiſe; which having no guide, overſeer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her food in the Harveſt.*

SECT. III.

Of Negligence.

I Now proceed to the *Second* Obſtruction mentioned in the Title of this Chapter, by which I underſtand ſomething more than that Word, in

its common Acceptation, is uſed to denote. For under the Character of *Negligent*, I comprehend all thoſe People, who how great ſoever their Care and Application in other Matters may be, are yet abſolutely void of all this, in Matters pertaining to God and Religion; and though they attend very diligently to the Affairs of the World, yet allow Heaven and the Salvation of their Souls the leaſt, if any Place at all in their Thoughts. Such are thoſe *Epicures* mentioned by St. *Paul*, of whom he told his *Philippians* even weeping, *Whoſe end is deſtruction; whoſe God is their Belly, who mind earthly things:* And heartily to be wiſhed it were, that this Deſcription did not preſent us with too lively an Image of Multitudes, who call themſelves Chriſtians at this Day. Such again are thoſe practical Atheiſts mentioned by the ſame Apoſtle in another of his Epiſtles, *whoſe very mind and conſcience is defiled; who profeſs that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

Phil. iii.

Tit. i. 15, 16.

They do not perhaps fly out into that Degree of Hardineſs, as openly to impugn the Being and Providence of God, but are deſirous to be reckoned among Believers: And yet, to a Man, who examines their Actions, it is manifeſt they are not ſuch at the Bottom. Their Lives are ſo notorious, ſo direct a Contradiction to all thoſe Attributes and Excellencies, which every one who believes a God muſt ſuppoſe to be in him, that we may truly call thoſe Men Infidels by interpretation, and neceſſary Conſequence, at leaſt: For, how ſhall they paſs for Men poſſeſt with any ſerious Senſe of the infinite Wiſdom and Knowledge of God, who are not afraid of committing any Sin, provided it can be covered from the Eyes of Men? Or of his Providence and Care of all the Affairs of this World, who neither truſt him in Danger, nor flee

to

to him in Diſtreſs, nor ſtick at any Methods, tho' never ſo offenſive to him, never ſo contrary to what he hath engaged himſelf to bleſs, to compaſs their Deſigns? Or of his Juſtice and Judgment to come, and the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State, who take no Care to appeaſe his Anger, to provide for that dreadful Day of reckoning, to qualify themſelves for that Happineſs, or to avoid thoſe unſpeakable Miſeries, which the Holy Ghoſt ſo often, and ſo expreſly declares, ſhall then be the everlaſting Portion of the Righteous and the Wicked reſpectively? Men may be as large, and as ſolemn, in theſe Profeſſions as they pleaſe, but there is no other way of proving themſelves in good earneſt, except that of making their Lives bear Teſtimony to the Sincerity of thoſe Profeſſions.

Of this kind again I eſteem them, whom ſome have thought aimed at by thoſe Ordinances in the *Jewiſh* Law, which prohibited the Plowing with an Ox, and an Aſs, and the wearing Garments of Linnen and Woollen mixt together; for ſo in effect do thoſe *lukewarm* Chriſtians, whom God expreſſes ſuch a Deteſtation of, for being *neither hot, nor cold.* Men I mean, who count the ſearch after Truth a Matter needleſs, and of no Conſequence; and are perfectly indifferent what Sort of Principles they entertain. As if the Grounds of Religion were to be remitted to the Men of Learning and Leiſure; and the being always *ready to give a reaſon of the hope that is in us*, were a Precept confined to our Teachers only. Theſe Men of Latitude comfort themſelves with the many Errors, and unhappy Diſputes, that have given Diſturbance to Religion, and reſt upon this Excuſe for their Careleſneſs in the Point of ſettling their own Mind; that it is of no great Conſequence how a Man believes, for an honeſt Man of any Perſuaſion may go to Heaven. This indeed is an Opinion rarely fitted for

Deut. xxii.

Rev. iii.

1 Pet. iii. 15.

for their Purpoſe, becauſe it leaves them at Liberty to accommodate themſelves to any Company, or any Change. No Tyrant's Command, no Errors impoſed by publick Authority can ever come amiſs to them. All Diſcourſe of Religion they look upon as Canting: Eating and Drinking, and vain Mirth, News, and Play, and the like, are their conſtant Entertainment; but for God and his Ways, the very Heathens themſelves do not conſider them leſs than theſe Men ſeem to do. And can we now with any Propriety of Speech call theſe Men Chriſtians, or Believers? Does not our bleſſed Saviour make this a Rule of judging, *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them?* Does he not lay it down as a certain Maxim, that *out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth ſpeaketh?* And again; that *where the Treaſure is, there will the Heart be alſo?* If then the Fruits of theſe Trees are ſo corrupt, ſhall we ſay of the Trees themſelves that they are Good? When their whole Converſation is made up of Vanity, and all their Deſigns terminate entirely upon the Delights and Advantages of Senſe and this preſent Life, ſhall we be ſo abſurd to think, that either their Heart or their Treaſure is in Heaven? Or may we not rather apply to ſuch the Deſcription of the *Epheſians*, in their yet unconverted State, that *they are Strangers from the Covenant of Promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world.*

Mat. vii. 20.
Mat. xii. 34.
Mat. vi. 20.
Eph. ii. 12.

This is indeed a very general Obſtruction, and ſeveral Cauſes might be aſſigned, which either give Birth, or at leaſt Increaſe and Encouragement to it. But theſe two are in a more obvious and eſpecial Manner obſervable to contribute to it. The *Firſt* is that unhappy Difference of ſeveral contending Parties and Opinions in Religion; which, by the Multitude and Intricacy of Diſputes upon controverted and leſs neceſſary Points, and by the ſharpneſs and uncharitable Management of thoſe engaged

engaged in them, tempt Men to ſuſpect, that Victory and Fame, rather than Truth, and the Honour of God, is the Prize they contend for; weary Men out in theſe perplexed Enquiries, till at laſt they grow to a diſeſteem of Religion in general: And, becauſe they find Perſons of great Learning and Judgment diſagree in ſome abſtruſe Points, take up with that moſt unreaſonable Inference, that they can arrive at certainty in none.

A *Second* Thing acceſſary to this Impediment is inordinate Love of the World, which naturally draws Men off from the Love of God; nay, even works them up to Hatred of, and Enmity againſt him; as both our bleſſed Lord and St. *James* have informed us: So that we are not to wonder, if from thenceforward they feel no ſenſible Delight in his Ways, nor retain any very moving Impreſſions of him upon their Minds. And theſe Perſons are very hard to be reclaimed indeed: Both becauſe they are ſunk into ſo great a Degree of Spiritual Inſenſibility, as ſtifles and ſuppreſſes any vigorous Thoughts of Amendment; and becauſe they ſhun the proper Means of their Cure. For what Hope can we conceive of that Patient, whoſe caſe is deſperate without Advice, and yet is ſo far from following Preſcriptions, that he will not bear ſo much as to hear of a Phyſician, nor allow any body to talk to him of his Danger or his Diſeaſe? Theſe Men then muſt needs be allowed to be in very ſad Circumſtances who will not be brought to any Senſe of their own Condition; but while they are perſuaded, that they are much wiſer than their Neighbours, take it for an Affront to be told of their Folly. Mat. vii. 24. James iv.

And yet, this is what they muſt be told of, before any Good can be done upon them. And would they be prevailed upon to ſuffer the Word of Exhortation, the propereſt Method of doing them Service, would be, to lay open their Sickneſs,

neſs, and the Danger of it, by giving them to underſtand, how very diſtant a Temper they are of from the true Spirit of the Chriſtian Religion; and conſequently from all the Hope of Happineſs, which they vainly cheriſh in themſelves, as belonging to them, merely for profeſſing themſelves to be Chriſtians. God requires that we ſhould *love him with all our Heart, with all our Mind, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength.* This is the firſt and great Commandment, a Commandment common to the Law, and Goſpel both; a Commandment of eternal Obligation, and the great Foundation of Morality, of natural, as well as revealed, Religion. And how far are theſe careleſs People from coming up to this Duty, who allow God ſo little Room in their Hearts, and employ ſo ſmall a Part of their Thoughts, or their Strength, in his Service? God commands us to ſtudy and to meditate upon his Law, to make it the Subject of our Thoughts and Diſcourſe, Night and Day, at Home and Abroad, early and late; And, how many Hours, how many Days, paſs theſe Wretches, without ſo much as one ſerious Reflection upon this Matter? Can they who ſcarce ever beſtow one poor Thought upon *Chriſt*, or what he hath done and ſuffered, what he came to teach, and what to purchaſe for them, Can theſe Men be called Chriſtians? They ſay, they believe in God, and ſerve him, but are they to be credited, who uſe all poſſible means to drive him out of their Minds; and, when temporal Obligations, or Decency, or ſome other Reſpect, foreign to Religion, engages them in Exerciſes of Devotion, account it a Wearineſs and a Burden, to hear his Word, to pray to him, to receive his Bleſſed Sacrament, or to do any of thoſe Things, which they who are Chriſtians indeed moſt gladly embrace the Opportunities of, and eſteem the greateſt

Mat. xxii. Deut. vi.

Privileg

Privilege and Bleſſing that mortal Men are capable of on this ſide Heaven?

Chriſt himſelf hath taught us, what proportion of our Value the Affairs and Enjoyments of this World deſerve, and how far they ought to be from coming into Competition with thoſe of another. *Thou art cumbred*, ſays he to *Martha*, *about many things*; *But there is one thing needful:* And by the Context it is plain beyond all diſpute, that the *one Thing* meant there is a diligent attendance upon the Service of God. But the Men, of whom I am now ſpeaking, find many other Things neceſſary, and this not ſo at all. St. *John* forbids us to *love the World, or the Things that are in the World*; and they love nothing but the World, and the Things that are in it. St. *James* declares every *Friend to the World, an Enemy to God*; and they think all Men their Enemies, who are not Friends to the World. *Chriſt* orders us to *Pray always, and not to faint*; Theſe Men ſeldom or never apply themſelves to God at all in this holy Duty. St. *Paul* would not have *Fornication, nor Uncleanneſs, nor Covetouſneſs, nor Filthineſs, nor Fooliſh Talking, nor ſcurrilous Jeſting, once named* among Chriſtians, as things altogether unbecoming the Converſation of Saints: And yet the Practice and Converſation of theſe Men is chiefly made up of this abominable mixture. St. *Peter* bids us be *Vigilant*; be *Sober*; and St. *Paul*, to be *fervent in Spirit, and continuing inſtant in Supplication, and all good Works:* And theſe perſons are the very reverſe of all this, Careleſs and Remiſs, Heavy and Inſenſible, Perverſe and inflexible, contemning and abhorring all thoſe duties, that tend to the mortifying of their Paſſions, and the true Service of their Crucified Saviour. What part then have theſe Men in the Lot or Portion of Chriſtians, but the empty Name only? And how little that is like to profit them in their great Extremity, our Lord hath given them ſufficient warning,

Luke x.

1 John ii. 15.

James iv.

Luke xviii. xxi.

Eph. v.

1 Pet. v. Rom. xii.

Matt. vii. 21, 22. warning, by saying, not only that, *Not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; but many, who had a great deal more to alledge for themselves, than a bare calling him Lord; even *prophecying in his Name, and casting out Devils, and doing many wonderful Works*, these shall be excluded that place of Bliss too, whither nothing can prevail for admittance, but that one indispensible condition, *The doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.*

And this is sufficient to shew how great and dangerous an Obstruction this Supine and Senseless Negligence is against that Holy Resolution, which I am pressing all my Readers to. For, if *Christ*, as is evident, both from the positive Precepts, and parabolical Allusions in the New Testament, if He, I say, require, that every one, who in good earnest pretends to be his Disciple, should be so vigorous and so perfect in this Resolution, as from the instant he is convinced how rich a Treasure is hid in this Field, to go and sell all that he hath, and purchase it; that is, in plain Terms, If it be a Christian's Duty to prefer the pursuit of those Designs, which aim at the Kingdom of Heaven, before all the Business, and Pleasures, and Enjoyments of this Life, of what kind soever they be; and rather venture all, than fail in this one Point: If *Christ*, I say, require us, as he evidently does, to save our Souls and serve him at any rate, and out of Hand; then, what shall become of those Men, or when can we ever hope to bring them to this Temper, who are so far from taking Heaven by Violence, that they will not even accept it, when offered, and in a manner thrust upon them? So unlikely to part with their All and buy this Treasure, that they cannot be prevailed with to part with even their Superfluities for the Relief of *Christ* in his needy Members? So unlikely to come up to the Price, at which the Gospel hath set it, that they do not care so much a

to treat about the Purchaſe; but are ſick of that Man, and his Converſation, who comes in Friendſhip and Duty, to make Propoſals, and perſuade them to this gainful Bargain?

That ſuch is the Temper of too too many, daily Experience does but too ſadly convince us; and, till they fall into ſome better way for changing their Diſpoſition, to ſpare an unneceſſary Enlargement here, I would intreat them to read attentively thoſe Chapters in the *Firſt* Part of this Book, which give an account of the Reaſons and Purpoſes, for which we were created and ſent into this World, and likewiſe of that reckoning, which God will moſt certainly call us to for the time we ſpend here. This, it is to be hoped, may in ſome good Degree awaken them out of this Spiritual Lethargy, and convince them, that however diſſolute and wicked People may ſleep ſecurely, yet their Damnation ſlumbreth not. And conſequently, that there cannot poſſibly be any Condition more dangerous, than that Man's who bends his Mind and Endeavours wholly to vanity and trifles in effect, (for ſuch are all the matters quite beſide the Purpoſes for which he was ſent into the World:) and in the mean while paſſes over his main Buſineſs, as if it were a Thing only by the by: Who will not be perſuaded to lend one ſerious Thought, to that which is moſt Neceſſary, moſt Important, moſt Advantagious; that which requires and deſerves his whole Study and Care; and without which all other Study and Care will only tend to render him more miſerable, more inexcuſable.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Hardneſs of Heart.

THIS is the laſt Obſtruction I ſhall ſpeak to, and by it I mean that evil Affection of Mind, mentioned by St. *Paul* in the Second to the *Romans*, and occurring in ſundry other Paſſages of Holy Scripture. By which, when compared together, we ſhall find to be meant, ſuch an obſtinate and pertinacious Spirit, as ſettles it ſelf reſolutely, never to give Ground; nor to move out of the preſent evil Way it hath taken to, whatever is, or can poſſibly be ſaid to perſuade a Change. And this I reſerved for my laſt Particular, becauſe it is indeed the laſt and higheſt Pitch of Wickedneſs. It includes, and exceeds all the Impediments that went before, and adds to all the reſt a wilfulneſs and malicious Purpoſe, directly oppoſite to that godly Reſolution, which I have been all this while labouring to gain Men over to.

Rom. ii. 5.

This Hardneſs of Heart admits of different Degrees, and we plainly find different ſorts of Perſons affected with it; Some in a much more dangerous and raging; others in a lower and more treatable manner. But ſome there are, who have got up to that higheſt and moſt impenetrable pitch of Obduration, that though they know and conſider they do amiſs, though they ſee, and believe, and remember perfectly, that they who do ſuch things, act againſt the plain and eternal Rules of Reaſon and Religion, and provoke God to Anger and ſevere Vengeance, yet come what will, they will have their Humour; and out of ſome Worldly or ſinful Reſpect or other, they perſiſt in their Wicked Intentions, in deſpight of all that can be urged by others, or by their own Conſciences, to terrify

terrify or to divert them. An Example of this we have in *Pilate*, who, though he examined *Jeſus* over and over, and as we may gueſs, would have been glad to find ſome colourable Pretence for his Sentence againſt him; though he was not only warned by his Wife, but fully ſatisfied in his own Conſcience; though he declared publickly and ſolemnly, that no Fault could be found in him; yet ſtill, rather than loſe the Favour of the People, and incur the Cenſure of not being a Friend to *Cæſar*, he condemned him to Death, and in ſo doing manifeſtly condemned himſelf of notorious Injuſtice. Such an Example we have likewiſe in *Pharaoh*, who, though he ſaw the Miracles of *Moſes* and *Aaron*, and ſmarted under the mighty Hand of God in ſo many repeated Plagues upon himſelf and his Subjects: Yet, rather than he would ſeem to be vanquiſhed and forced at laſt to relent, perſevered in his Malice till at laſt he was utterly deſtroyed in his Wickedneſs. Such an inſtance again we have in the Idolatrous *Jews*, who returned this, as their final and peremptory Anſwer to *Jeremiah*, *As for the Word, that thou haſt ſpoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth out of our own Mouth.* But alas! we need not go ſo far for Examples of this kind, every Age and Place is too full of them. All that ſet themſelves to revile, and contemn, and perſecute Religion and Good Men; All that endeavour to oppoſe Innocence, and laugh Virtue out of the World; All that decline the Practice of it for fear of Deriſion, or the Imputation of Singularity, are evidently of this ungodly Temper, and ſeldom come off from it till God himſelf cuts them off in the midſt of their Malice and Fury againſt them.

Jer xliv. 16, 17.

Others again there are, who, though they do not perſiſt in their Wickedneſs directly againſt

their own Knowledge, are but yet very little, if at all more excuſable, than thoſe that do. Such I mean, as will not know, nor be made ſenſible of their Danger, but by an affected Ignorance of their Duty, labour to keep their Conſciences quiet, and dread nothing ſo much as that Light, which may diſcover them to themſelves, and bring them over to a better courſe. Theſe are the Perſons, who, as *Job* obſerves, *ſay unto God, depart from us, for we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways*; and of whom *David* tells us, that *they are like the deaf Adder that ſtoppeth her Ears, which refuſeth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely.* Where by the Charmer is meant the Holy Spirit of God, which by all poſſible Means labours to diſengage Men from the bewitching Deluſions of Sin: But, as another Prophet complains, *They refuſe to hearken, and pull away the Shoulder, they ſtop their Ears, that they ſhould not hear: yea, they make their Hearts as an Adamant Stone, leſt they ſhould hear the Law, and the Words, which the Lord of Hoſts hath ſent in his Spirit by his Prophets.*

Job xxi. 14.
Pſal. lviii. 4, 5.
Zech. vii. 11, 12.

This grievous Sin is upon all Occaſions, charged upon the *Jewiſh* Nation. *Ye will not come to me that ye might have Life. How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not?* ſays our Bleſſed Saviour. And St. *Stephen, Ye ſtiff-necked and uncircumciſed in Heart and Ears, ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt:* Meaning thereby, all the Meſſengers ſent by God, when thoſe Servants and Miniſters, in whom the Holy Ghoſt ſpake, came to teach them the Truth, and preſs'd them to amendment of Life; All thoſe Miracles he wrought by thoſe Men's Miniſtry for their Conviction; All the inward Checks and holy Motions which he ſecretly breathed into their Hearts. And yet, notwithſtanding the Opportunities of knowing God's good Pleaſure, notwithſtanding the Teſtimonies he gave to the Truth, though they had nothing to object either againſt the

Joh. v. 40.
Mat. xxiii. 37.
Acts vii. 15.

Doctri

Doctrine itself, or the Miracles that confirmed it, which could in Reason bear them out, they still resolved not to be won over; but instead of complying with what they could not contradict, they fell foul upon their Teachers, and all this, because, as *Jeremy* says, *They have a revolting and a rebellious Heart, and had made their Faces harder than a Rock.* Jer. v. And again, lamenting this inflexible Obstinacy, *Why*, says he, *is this People slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkned and heard, but they spake not aright; no Man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his Course, as the Horse rusheth to the Battel.* Jer. viii. 5, 6. And the same Disposition is plainly intimated in all those kind Expostulations between God and his People, in the Eighteenth and Thirty third of *Ezekiel*, *Why will ye die, O House of* Israel? *For I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, wherefore turn your selves and live ye.* V. 31, 32. What could more expressly, more pathetically, lay their Destruction at their own Door, than thus in effect to say: *Why will my People ruin themselves, when I have been so industrious, and am so vehemently desirous to save them? Why are they wilfully deaf to all my Instructions, and Reproofs? so perversly bent upon Mischief, as not to learn how they may prevent it? so cruel to themselves, as not to be made sensible of their own Danger? That Danger, which they may avert, and which I, who tenderly love them, most passionately wish they could see in time, that so they might escape it.*

Imagine with thyself, whoever thou art, that readest these Passages, that God in them is addressing himself, not only to those *Jews*, but to many Thousands of ungracious Christians, and among them perhaps, to thy own self. For to thee he certainly speaks, if thou refuse his good Motions, and the other Means of Grace afforded thee; if thou holdest out against his repeated Importuni-

ties, and be reſolved to follow the Imaginations of thy own Heart, and to continue thy old vicious Cuſtoms whatever the Conſequence of theſe Things may be at laſt. And, God knows, there are but too many pretended Chriſtians, that give Occaſion to be argued with after this Manner. They dare not read good Books, nor hear good Sermons, for fear of being convinced, that ſome things are neceſſary to be done, which yet they have not the Heart to do; for fear their Conſciences ſhould be awakened with ſome powerful Truth, and not let them reſt any more, till they have bid adieu to ſome darling Sin, or mortified ſome Paſſion, which they find great Delight in gratifying. How many, who have not the Confidence to ſpeak it out, have yet this Language in their Hearts, that they *have made a Covenant with Death, and are in League with Hell?* They are content to take what follows, provided they may enjoy the preſent without any Diſturbance; and therefore deſire not to be interrupted with any vain Perſuaſions. Theſe may do good upon them who have not made their laſt Choice, but for their own Parts they are fixed. Let others, who think Heaven worth their while, take it upon the Terms as it is promiſed; that they are at a Point, and all they covet now, is, not to be diſturbed with any new Diſcoveries of their Danger; which they had rather ſuffer than ſee, and made to be uneaſy with Propoſals, which they have already determined not to cloſe with, for the preventing it.

What a marvellous Infatuation is this, to affect to go to Hell with our Eyes ſhut; and how fitly compared to the Rage and Venom of Serpents? Of theſe the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſays, that *their Neck is an Iron Sinew, and their Brow is Braſs.* What can be more emphatical, to expreſs the Hardneſs and Impenetrability of the Metal? Agreeable to which Repreſentation is that of St. *Bernard:* "A hard "Heart, ſays he, is neither wounded by Com-"punction,

Iſa. xlviii. 4.

L 2. de Conſid. ad Eug. c. 2.

" punction, nor ſoftned by Goodneſs, nor moved " by Intreaties, nor bent by Threatnings, nor at " all made more gentle, but more ſtiff rather and " tough, by Chaſtiſements. It is ungrateful for " the Mercies of God, diſobedient to his Com- " mands, enraged by his Judgments, made wanton " and preſumptuous by his Grace and Promiſes, " loſt to all Senſe and Shame, fool-hardy in Dan- " ger, rough and untractable in the Affairs of this " World, inſenſible in thoſe of another, forgetful " of the paſt, regardleſs of the preſent, improvi- " dent for the future.

And if this be a true Account of the Diſeaſe, where ſhall we be able to find a Remedy? What can we do to mend it? Lay before ſuch a one the Heinouſneſs of his Sins; he triumphs in, or at leaſt he is not mortified with the ſad Spectacle. Talk to him of the Reaſonableneſs and the Advantages of Religion, the Folly and Danger of a wicked Life, he is Proof againſt all your Arguments. Intreat him, importune him, nay add Tears to your Prayers, he is not to be melted down at this Rate. Tell him of the angry Juſtice of an avenging God, and the Torments of Hell, he looks upon them, as a melancholick Dream, and a painted Fire. If it pleaſe God to ſcourge him with Afflictions, he is enraged, and grows more furious and deſperate than before; if he invite him with Mercy and Kindneſs, he is ungrateful, and conſiders not that theſe lead to Repentance. If you aſſure him of Forgiveneſs upon his Reformation; this puts him upon turning God's Grace into Laſciviouſneſs, and renders him preſumptuous and ſecure. If you repreſent to him the Vileneſs of his own Behaviour; he is loſt to all Shame. If you lay before him the Terrors of the Divine Vengeance; he is Proof againſt all Fear. In a word, he regards not the Diſpenſations of Providence towards others, though they be moſt remarkable, either for the rewarding

of eminent Virtue, or puniſhing outragious Vice. And what way then is there left to do this Man good, whom neither Precepts nor Counſels, neither Mercies nor Puniſhments, neither his own nor other Peoples Proſperity or Adverſity, will have any Influence upon?

From this Account of a hardned Heart, we plainly perceive, that when God declared he would harden the Heart of *Pharaoh*, he threatned that Puniſhment, as the dreadfulleſt Judgment, that could poſſibly be inflicted for his former Iniquities: And yet all this, in the true Acceptation of the Words, imported no more than that God by withdrawing his Grace, would ſuffer *Pharaoh* to perſiſt in his Wickedneſs, and to harden his own Heart. And on the other Hand, when he promiſes a ſpecial Mercy, it is expreſs'd in theſe Terms, that *he will take away from his People a ſtony Heart, and give unto them a Heart of Fleſh*; that is, one tender and ſenſible, and ſuch as ſhall be moved by good Impreſſions. And there is no doubt to be made, but this is effectually the greateſt and moſt valuable Bleſſing, that God does at any Time beſtow upon Mankind: To have ſuch a Heart, as when its natural Corruptions draw it aſide, is quickly check'd and controuled; and when the Remembrance of Sins recurs upon it, is deeply pierced and wounded with the Senſe of its own Vileneſs, and Ingratitude, and deſperate Folly, and bleeds under the afflicting Remembrance, and is effectually excited to Repentance and Amendment. And on the other Hand, the heavieſt Curſe that can poſſibly befal any Chriſtian, is, to be given over to a reprobate Senſe, and a hard Heart, ſuch as ſins without any Remorſe; and by doing ſo, heaps up a dreadful Load of Vengeance to itſelf; ſuch as St. *Paul* compares to the Ground which no Rain can ſoften, but is curſed, and *bearing*

Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

bearing nothing but Briars and Thorns, its end is to be burned.

And does not this Account now furniſh us with an excellent Reaſon, why the Holy Ghoſt ſhould upon all Occaſions, ſpeak ſo vehemently, and with ſuch Deteſtation againſt this evil Diſeaſe, and warn Men ſo ſolemnly, and ſo frequently, that they be careful not to be corrupted by it? For where indeed could ſuch Warmth and Affection be more properly employed, than in ſecuring Men from a Diſtemper, that carries ſo many mortal Symptoms with it, and is but a very little on this Side final Reprobation itſelf? To this Purpoſe is that of St. *Paul* to the *Epheſians*, whom he warns againſt filthy and obſcene Diſcourſe, and ſome other infamous Practices, which betray a profligate Mind, from this Argument particularly; *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed to the Day of Redemption.* He likewiſe adviſes the *Theſſalonians*, by no means to *quench the Spirit.* Now theſe Texts, though different in form, yet in Subſtance come up to our preſent Subject. For the Spirit of God is then *quenched*, when our Wickedneſs ſtifles and reſiſts his holy Motions; and he is then *grieved*, when we continue obdurate, and perſiſt in ſuch diſſolute Practices, as are an Affront and Diſhonour to, a declaring War againſt, and open Defiance of him.

Eph. iv. 30.

1 Theſ. v. 19.

Another Paſſage there is, and a very ſolemn one, which does not only by Interpretation, but in expreſs Terms come up to our Caſe. 'Tis that to the *Hebrews*, *Take heed, Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil Heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, leſt any of you be hardned through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.* What *Joſhua* obſerves concerning a temporal Judgment upon the Cities of *Canaan*, is very applicable and true in a ſpiritual Signification: *It is of the Lord to harden their*

Heb. iii. 12, 13.

Joſh. 11. 20.

Hearts, that he might deſtroy them utterly; for when God ſuffers Men to come into this Condition, they ſeem to be Perſons quite given over, and marked out for Ruin. Hence are thoſe Obſervations of the wiſe Man, *Happy is the Man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his Heart, ſhall fall into miſchief*; and *he that being often reproved, hardneth his Heart, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without Remedy.* Hence is that Prayer of *Solomon, give therefore thy Servant an underſtanding Heart, that I may diſcern between Good and Evil.* What we tranſlate an *Underſtanding*, is in the Original, a *hearing Heart*, that is, a tender and tractable Spirit, willing to be taught, and ready to receive good Impreſſions. Such a one as is deſcribed in that memorable Paſſage of *Iſaiah, To this Man will I look, ſaith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

Prov. xxviii. 14. Prov. xxix. 1. 1 King. iii. 9. Iſa. lxvi. 2.

This then is the Temper, which God values highly, and requires we ſhould be of. A meek and gentle, and humble Spirit; a Heart full of Contrition for Offences paſt, and diſpoſed to receive every Inſtruction and Reproof, every Promiſe and Threatning with all that Reverence and Awe, which becomes the Word ſent down to us from ſo great a Majeſty. How then ſhall we eſcape, if we ſtand unconcerned, and pay no Regard at all to ſo many Exhortations, to ſo many Warnings of our Danger, deſigned to awaken us, denouncing Wrath inſupportable and everlaſting Torments againſt obſtinate Impenitence? How ſhall we dare to provoke the Diſpleaſure of an Almighty Avenger? And yet this we manifeſtly do, if we defer our holy Reſolutions, and will not be perſuaded to mend our Lives. A very ſmall Part of that which hath been ſaid in this Treatiſe might ſuffice to prevail upon a conſiderate and well-diſpoſed Mind for ſpeedy Reformation; But if the whole make no Impreſſion, nor promote theſe good Purpoſes, my Reader hath a very

very hard and impenetrable Heart indeed: And all I can do more for ſuch a one, is moſt humbly and earneſtly to beſeech him, in whoſe Hand the Hearts of all Men are, to ſoften him with the precious Blood of that his only Son and our only Saviour, who was content to ſhed it upon the Croſs, for this very Purpoſe, that he might *turn the Hearts of the Diſobedient to the Wiſdom of the Juſt, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.*

The CONCLUSION.

I HAVE, throughout this whole Treatiſe, confined my Diſcourſe to ſuch Arguments, as might move my Reader to this ſingle Point of holy Reſolution only, without enlarging particularly upon the ſeveral Methods fit to be taken, for the entring upon, advancing in, and bringing to its juſt Perfection, a truly Chriſtian Life. And this I did, upon a certain View, that when once this Reſolution is vigorous and ſtedfaſt, a Mind ſo diſpoſed will never be at a Loſs for proper Ways of putting it in Execution. As alſo, being conſcious to myſelf, how many excellent Books are extant and eaſy to be met with, and how ready the bleſſed Spirit of God will be with his inward Aſſiſtances and Directions to forward and give Succeſs to the pious Endeavours of all ſuch, as diligently and conſcientiouſly make uſe of thoſe outward Helps, of which his gracious Providence hath provided ſo plentiful a Store. And though more, it is poſſible, might be ſaid for this one Point, than either occurs in this, or can be comprehended in any Volume of moderate Proportion, yet I cannot but be of Opinion, that either the Reaſons alledged here may ſuffice; or elſe, that where they prove ineffectual, nothing

nothing will be ſufficient for the vanquiſhing thoſe Mens Obſtinacy, and reducing them to the Obedience of that rightful Lord, from whom by Sin they have grievouſly revolted.

For here we ſee unanſwerable Arguments for the Love and Service of Almighty God, and the effectual renouncing and irreconcileable Deteſtation of Vice. We have evident Demonſtration of a God that made us, and all the World; we are informed, for what End he created us, and that this was no other, than to glorify his Majeſty by our Service; we are taught, wherein that Service required from us conſiſts, and that God at preſent expects, and will accept no other, than the living in Obedience to the Commands of *Chriſt*, delivered in his holy Goſpel; we are told, what particular Qualifications are there ſet down, as diſtinguiſhing Characters of all the true Diſciples of *Jeſus*: We have had Warning of that impartial Account which God will one Day take of all our Actions: How wonderfully good he is to us in the mean while, how watchful over us, how ſolicitous to win us, how liberal in his Rewards, if we do well; how ſevere and terrible in his Puniſhments, if we continue refractory, hath been at large explained.

And farther yet, in regard the Tempter throws many Objections and Diſcouragements in our Way, to beat us off from that Reſolution, which effectually breaks his Yoke, and ſets us free from his Tyranny, I have taken Care to lay open the Vanity and Deceit of thoſe Obſtructions and Excuſes. The Unreaſonableneſs of Deſpair, of the pretended Difficulties of a holy Life, the falſe Flatteries of the World and its Allurements, are detected and expoſed: The Folly of preſuming upon God's Mercy, if we perſiſt in an evil Courſe: The Danger of delaying our Repentance, of Slothfulneſs in our great Affair, of Careleſneſs in Matters relating to Religion and a future State; and laſtly, the almoſt

deſperate

deſperate Condition of hard and ſtony Hearts, which are Proof againſt all the Arts of Perſuaſion, and the Diſpenſations of Providence, is here at large declared. And theſe Rocks are now ſet in plain View, that no unwary Soul may ſplit upon them, and make Shipwrack of Faith, and a good Conſcience hereafter, for want of due Notice, where his Danger lies, and how it may be avoided. And what now can any Man in Reaſon deſire more, to diſpoſe him to a good Life? What need can there be of other Arguments to deter Men from Wickedneſs and Vice, than thus undeniably to prove, that they who perſevere in it, do moſt aſſuredly deceive and deſtroy their own Souls?

Do not then read this Book merely for Diverſion and Entertainment; do not, when thou haſt read it through, lay it aſide without any farther Thought, and perſiſt in thy vicious Cuſtoms as ſecurely as before; but remember it treateth of thy greateſt Concern, and that thy Condemnation will be more certain, more heavy, if thou neglect and defeat theſe Motives to Repentance, than if they had never come within thy Knowledge, or been offered to thy Conſideration at all. And how wilt thou eſcape, or who can have Hopes of thee, if theſe Arguments are loſt upon thee? Doſt thou think to go to Heaven without forſaking thy Sins? That is impoſſible: Thou mayſt as well imagine to baniſh the holy God from thence, as to find a Place there for a polluted Conſcience. Wilt thou then be content to forego Heaven, and yet at the ſame time hope to eſcape Hell? Alas! that is every whit as extravagant a Deluſion as the former: Another Condition moſt certainly awaits thee, after thy Departure hence, and that Condition lies all in Extremes; there is no middle State, between unſpeakable Bliſs and Glory, and everlaſting Torture and Shame. Wilt thou then adjourn the Thoughts of this Matter till ſome diſtant Day? Nay, but conſider, Man, what hath been made

made out to thee upon this Point: That there is no Likelihood of thy being either more able or more willing, to repent at any time hereafter; and ſtrong Preſumptions, that thou wilt then feel thyſelf leſs ſo, than thou art now: If God's Grace be rejected at preſent, it is great Odds, it will either not be offered, or if it be, that it will not meet with better Reception another Time. The Offers of this Grace are in the Diſpoſal of the Giver, and ſo are the Opportunities for uſing it too, and thou canſt have no Security, that thou ſhalt not be cut off from the Land of the Living, before the Time thus pretended to be fixed for thy Amendment comes. The only way then of doing this great Work effectually, is to do it preſently.

Break away therefore from that Tyrant, that Uſurper, that wrongfully holds thee in Bondage; ſhake off his Chains immediately, and cut his Bands in ſunder; and throw thyſelf into the Protection of that triumphant Saviour, whoſe Arms are always wide open to receive thee, and who by his marvellous Condeſcenſion to the Death of the Croſs, *hath overcome him that had the Power of Death, even the Devil.* Behold thou haſt it in thy Power to add to the already unſpeakable Joys of Heaven. The Converſion of a Sinner we are told will do it. O! make the Angels glad, and thyſelf happy; renew thy Covenant with God, by firm Reſolutions of better Obedience, and dare to acquit thyſelf manfully, as becomes a good Soldier of *Jeſus Chriſt:* Imitate St. *Jerom*'s Courage, and determine with thine own Heart, that neither Father nor Mother, neither the tendereſt Affection, nor the moſt vehement Importunites of any Relations or Friends upon Earth, neither Temptations nor Terrors, Proſperity or Adverſity, ſhall keep thee one Moment longer from *Chriſt*; ſince no Calamity can be comparable to that of a Heart eſtranged from him, and no Duty to others ought to take Place, to

Heb. ii. 14.

Hier. ad Heliodor.

the

the Prejudice of the Duty thou oweſt to thy own Soul.

And oh! that there were in us ſuch a Heart, ſo reſolute, ſo zealous, ſo fervent, in the Love and Service of our deareſt Maſter and Redeemer: That we would now at leaſt bethink ourſelves, not to be ſatisfied to feed upon Huſks with Swine any longer, when, like that Image of all returning Sinners, the Prodigal Son, we have Aſſurance of being honourably received, affectionately and gladly entertained, and as well eſteemed by our reconciled Father, as if we had never offended him at all. I call this an Aſſurance, for it is nothing leſs; ſince we have ſo many, ſo expreſs, ſo ſolemn Declarations of his Readineſs to forgive. His, I ſay, who cannot lie, and who, whatever he promiſes, performs it to the uttermoſt. Return then, I beſeech you, and lay hold of thoſe Promiſes, which never failed any, which cannot fail them which believe and depend upon them. Run while he calls, and ſlip not the Time which can never be retrieved; for all the World, could'ſt thou poſſeſs it entire, would not make thee ſo happy, as this one Act of ſeaſonable Compliance with the Invitations of thy God and Saviour: This would be the critical Moment, from which thou mighteſt date thy preſent Comforts, and everlaſting Bleſſedneſs: And O! that it may pleaſe the Father of Mercies ſo to diſpoſe thine, and mine, and every Chriſtian's Heart, to the Attainment of everlaſting Salvation, that we may work the Works of him that ſent us, while it is Day, before the Night come, wherein no Man can work. Grant this, we beſeech thee, O merciful Lord, for his ſake, who came to call Sinners to Repentance, even thy Son our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*. *Amen*.

THE END.

THIS Book containing ſeveral Truths of the utmoſt Importance, and thoſe placed in a ſtrong and advantagious Light, it may juſtly be eſteemed ſuch as we ought not to be content with reading once over, but capable of making an excellent Companion in the Cloſet, and which we ſhall find it well worth our Pains to conſider often with diligent Attention, and by ſerious Meditation throughly to digeſt it. Its *Romiſh* Editors were very ſenſible of this, and therefore added Directions for the more profitable reading of it. Some Perſons who highly valued the Book, applied thoſe Directions to the reformed Edition, and read it in the Methods preſcibed by them, and thought they found very happy Effects from ſo doing. At the Requeſt of one of theſe, thoſe Directions are allowed a Place here.

A brief Method of uſing the Chriſtian Directory *to good Purpoſe; by which the Book is divided into ſeveral Portions, proper for the Employment of the Reader's Meditation, and ſome Rules for this Kind of Meditation are laid down.*

BY Meditation we here mean an attentive reading and conſidering, as in the Preſence of God, ſome Part or Portion of the Book, with a Deſign to improve ourſelves in the Belief and Practice of Religion, in order to promote God's Glory, and the Salvation of our own Souls, which is the End every where aimed at in this whole Work.

Here is contrived a Courſe of ſuch Meditations for the Space of four and twenty Days, allotting two for each Day, and theſe again are of two Sorts, as will be

be ſhewn hereafter. When the devout Reader has gone over theſe, he may begin again, and continue to uſe them ſo long as he ſhall find it for his Purpoſe, reading ſometimes one Sort, ſometimes the other, as he likes beſt. Beſides, here are pointed out ſeveral occaſional Meditations adapted to the different States, Neceſſities, and Diſpoſitions of Men.

In the reading of any of theſe obſerve the following Rules.

I. *Preparation.* Firſt, When you apply yourſelf to this Exerciſe, intend ſeriouſly the Improvement of your Soul, and conſider before you begin, the Importance of your Work, and the Majeſty of that God in whoſe Preſence you are to carry it on; and how you would behave yourſelf even before an earthly King, the greateſt of which are poor Worms, are nothing, in compariſon of the great King of Heaven and Earth.

II. *External Humiliation.* Secondly, When you have thus humbled your Soul, even unto the very Duſt, expreſs your inward Adoration, to the beſt of your Power, by ſuitable outward Geſtures and Actions, as *Chriſt* and St. *Paul* did, when they caſt themſelves upon their Faces or their Knees at the beginning of their Prayers.

III. *Prayer before Meditation.* Thirdly, Beg God's Grace, that your Soul may receive real Benefit by that Meditation, and that in it his ſaving Truths may be carried home to your Conſcience and Affections; uſing ſome ſuch ſhort Prayer as you will find at the End of theſe Rules.

IV. *Reading over the Matter.* Fourthly, Place yourſelf in what decent Poſture you pleaſe, as you find beſt for the Repoſe of your Mind, and read over the Portion aſſigned for your Meditation, not ſlightly and haſtily, but leiſurely, ſeriouſly, and with a fixed Attention; and with ſuch an honeſt and obedient Heart as might warrant you to ſay with *Samuel*, *Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth.*

V. *Conſideration.* Fifthly, When you have read over the Matter, or in the Courſe of your reading, if you ſee Cauſe, ſtop,

ſtop, and dwell upon what Particulars you think moſt for your Purpoſe; if need be, go over ſuch Paſſages a ſecond or a third Time; always inſiſting longeſt upon what moſt vigorouſly affects you; contriving how to reduce all to Practice, and to the exciting and confirming of pious Reſolutions; ſome or all of which Reſolutions try all Means to put in Execution the very Day they are made.

VI. *Prayer after Meditation.*

Sixthly and laſtly, When you have done all Diligence to improve ſuch good Motions as the Matter of your Meditation affords you, caſt yourſelf down again before Almighty God, and with all poſſible Fervency beg of him what your Soul in that Inſtant moſt earneſtly deſires; and ſo you may conclude with the Prayer here aſſigned, or any other of the like Nature.

A Prayer before Meditation.

O Everlaſting, Almighty, and moſt merciful Lord and Father, I preſent myſelf here before thy Divine Majeſty, moſt humbly craving the Aſſiſtance of thy holy Spirit in this Meditation which I now take in hand, that my Soul may receive Comfort and Benefit by it. Give me, O Father of all Mercy and Creator of good Spirits, ſuch a docile and tender Heart, as may be pierced with thy holy Inſpirations. Make my Spirit attentive to thoſe Fatherly Admonitions which thou ſhalt pleaſe to give me during this Exerciſe. Enlighten my Underſtanding, incline my Will, ſtir up my Affections, confirm my good Reſolutions, ſtrengthen my Memory in the retaining of all ſuch Things as it ſhall pleaſe thy Goodneſs to reveal to me at this Inſtant, or any other Time, for my Salvation.

Grant this, O merciful God, for thy dear Son our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, who has aſſured us, that thou wilt never deny thy good Spirit to him, who in Sincerity prays for it. *Amen.*

A Prayer

A Prayer after Meditation.

Behold, O Lord my God, most merciful and patient, with how many Failings I have passed over this time of Meditation and treating with Thee: [* *with how much Negligence, Sloth, Coldness and Distraction, and with how little feeling of thy good Motions within me:*] but Thou, O Lord, knowest all my Infirmities, and Miseries, and therefore I beseech Thee to pardon and heal them. And I give Thee most humble and hearty Thanks for all the good Thoughts and Suggestions, which have presented themselves to my Mind in the Time of this Meditation. O may thy Divine Goodness give me Grace to imprint them deeply in my Heart, and put them in Execution, in the Course of my Life to come; that my Judgment and Damnation be not the more grievous in respect of these thy Benefits, but rather that my Life being amended thereby, and my Soul excited to more Zeal in thy Service, I may finally, with thy faithful Children, be made Partaker of that Eternal Bliss, which thou hast prepared for such as love, fear, and serve Thee, and yield Obedience to those Holy Inspirations, which Thou sendest them for their Eternal Happiness, Grant this, O Lord, for *Jesus Christ* his Sake, thy beloved Son and our merciful Saviour, to whom with Thee, and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory world without end. *Amen.*

* *This is not to be said but when you have been guilty of what is here confessed.*

The first sort of Meditations being twenty eight in number, containing Matter proper to excite our Affections to Piety and Devotion, are divided into fourteen Days or two Weeks, allowing to each Day two Meditations.

The First Week.

Sunday.

Morning. Consider the whole Chapter of *Inconsideration.* p. 1.
Evening. The whole Chapter about *The End for which Man was created.* p. 40.

Monday.

Morning. The first Part of Chap. V. Part I. *Of Faith.* p. 113.
Evening. The second Part of the same Chapter, *Of Good Works.* p. 114.

Tuesday.

Morning. Chap. VI. Part I. from p. 120. to p. 134. *Of Eschewing Evil.*
Evening. From p. 134. to p. 140. *Of doing Good.*

Wednesday.

Morning. Chap. VII. Part I. from p. 140. to p. 145. *Of Judgment and the Preparations for it.*
Evening. From p. 146. to p. 153. being the End of Chap. VII. Part I.

Thursday.

Morning. Chap. VIII. Part. I. p. 153. *Of the Nature and Guilt of Sin.*
Evening. Chap. IX. Part I. p. 164. *Sin aggravated by the consideration of God's Majesty and Benefits.*

Friday.

Morning. Chap. X. Part I. p. 176. *Of the time of our Death,* &c.
Evening. Chap. XI. Part I. p. 192. *Of the Sinner's Punishment after Death.*

Saturday.

Morning. Chap. XII. Part I. from p. 211. to p. 224.
Evening. From p. 224. to the End of Part I.

} *The noble Rewards of good Men.*

The

The Second Week.

Sunday.

Chap. I. Part II. from p. 237. to p 252. *Of God's Love to Mankind.* — *Morning.*

From p. 253. to the End of that Chapter. *Assurance of Pardon to true Penitents.* — *Evening.*

Monday.

Chap. II. Part II. from p. 271. to p. 289. *Against the pretended Difficulties of a good Life.* — *Morning.*

From p. 289. to p. 303. *Helps to overcome Difficulties.* — *Evening.*

Tuesday.

Chap. III. Part II. from p. 304. to p. 320. *Of Persecutions and Afflictions.* — *Morning.*

From p. 320. to p. 333. *Comfort and Advice under them.* — *Evening.*

Wednesday.

Chap. IV. Part II. from p. 333. to p. 355. *The Love of the World.* — *Morning.*

From p. 355. to p. 373. *The World compared to Thorns, &c.* — *Evening.*

Thursday.

Chap. V. Part II. from p. 373. to p. 385. — *Morning.*

From p. 385. to the End of Chap. V. — *Against Presumption on God's Mercy.* — *Evening.*

Friday.

Chap. VI. Part II. from p. 397. to p. 426. *Of delaying Repentance, and the Thief on the Cross.* — *Morning.*

From p. 427. to the End of Chap. VI. *Exhortations to speedy Repentance.* — *Evening.*

Saturday.

Chap. VII. Part II. from p. 437. to p. 451. *Of Sloth and Negligence.* — *Morning.*

From p. 452. to the End of the Book. *Of Hardness of Heart.* — *Evening.*

The Second sort of Meditations, being twenty in number, contain matter proposed rather for Speculation and Knowledge, than to excite the Affections; and therefore are sometimes to be used, as well for the Improvement of our Knowledge, and the Confirmation of our Faith, (they being commonly short) as for Variety and Recreation of the Mind, when the Reader is either weary or not willing to be spurred on by the other sort of Meditations, which have more power to exhort and move. They are divided into ten days, two for each day.

The First Day.

Morning. Read from the beginning of Chap. II. p. 11. to §. 2. p. 15.

Evening. From the beginning of §. 2. Chap. II. p. 15. to the End of the *Metaphysical Proofs of a God.* p. 21..

The Second Day.

Morning. Consider *the Proofs of Moral Philosophers for the Being of a God.* from p. 21. to p. 25.

Evening. Examine the six first Arguments *for the Authority of the Holy Scriptures.* Chap. II. §. 3. from p. 25 to p. 33.

The Third Day.

Morning. Consider the seventh Argument for *the Authority of the Scriptures*, beginning at p. 33. and ending at p. 37. with these words, *and the Divinity of its Author.*

Evening. From those words p. 37. to the end of Chap. II.

The Fourth Day.

Morning. From the beginning of Chap. IV. p. 48. to those words p. 56. *and that it should never have an End.*

Evening. The second Consideration beginning p. 57. and ending p. 59. at the words, *and expected by the Jews.*

The Fifth Day.

Morning. The third and fourth Consideration of the same Section, beginning p. 59. and ending p. 63. with these words, *of the Messias his coming into the World.*

Evening. From p. 64. to the End of that Section. p. 67.

The

The Sixth Day.

From the beginning of §. 3. p. 67. concerning *the Time of Chriſt's coming*, to p. 73. ending with thoſe Words, *the true Meſſias and Saviour of the World.* *Morning.*

From p. 73. to p. 78. being the ſecond Conſideration. *Evening.*

The Seventh Day.

Of the Life and Converſation, &c. *of Jeſus*, from p. 78. to p. 84. *Morning.*

Of the Paſſion, Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of Jeſus. From p. 84. to p. 92. *Evening.*

The Eighth Day.

From the beginning of §. 4. p. 93. to p. 95. *Of the Increaſe of Chriſt's Church.* *Morning.*

From p. 95. to p. 96. *Of the Actions of the Apoſtles.* *Evening.*

The Ninth Day.

From p. 96. to p. 99. *The Evangeliſts and their Writings.* *Morning.*

From p. 99. to p. 103. *The Sufferings of Martyrs, and Power over Devils.* *Evening.*

The Tenth Day.

From p. 103. to p. 108. *Of Chriſt's Enemies, and the Accompliſhments of his Prophecies.* *Morning.*

The Concluſion of Chap. IV. p. 108. *Evening.*

Occaſional Meditations, ſuited to the different States, Neceſſities, Diſpoſitions, and other Circumſtances of Perſons.

N. B. The pious Reader may be pleaſed to take Notice, that the Parcels and Portions of this Book recommended to his Uſe upon the ſeveral Occaſions here mentioned, may be ſerviceable to him not only in his own private Devotions, but in the Exerciſe and Practice of his Charity to the Souls of others. He may talk over the Subſtance, or adviſe the reading, of any of them, as he ſhall think them capable of being beneficial to any of his Children, Servants, Scholars

Scholars, or any other Relations, Neighbours, or Christian Friends.

I. *Dulness and Inconsideration.* If a person be dull, slothful, heavy, careless and unwilling to hear or consider seriously of spiritual Things, let him read Chap. I. Part I. p. 1, &c. As also § 1, 2, 3. of Chap. VII. Part II. p. 437, &c. To which may be added Chap. III. Part I. p. 40, &c. and Chap. VII. Part I. p. 140.

II. *Aversion to good Books, &c.* Let him also examine into the Cause of this Listlessness and Inconsideration, trying himself by the three Causes of this Evil assigned, p. 3, 4. especially if he finds within himself any Aversion to, and Abhorrence of, the reading of good Books or other spiritual Exercises, which is the Case of too many, and for which the above-mention'd Portions of this Book may afford a good Remedy.

III. *Doubts of the Being and Providence of God.* He whose Faith is weak, or assaulted by the Wiles and Temptations of the Devil or wicked Men, has many Things in this Book to confirm and settle him: Particularly,

IV. *Doubts about the Authority of the Scripture.* If he be inclined or sollicited to downright Atheism, or in Doubts about the Being and Providence of God, let him read Chap. II. Part I. p. 11, &c.

If he believes the Being and Providence of God, but doubts of the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, let him consider what is said § 3. of Chap. II. Part I. p. 11, &c.

V. *Of the Truth of the Christian Religion.* He that has any Doubts concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion may read Chap. IV. Part I. p. 48, &c.

VI. *Easiness to Sin.* He that finds himself or others easy to fall into Sin, and that without Remorse, may read Ch. VIII. and IX. Part I. p. 153, &c.

VII. *Security and fearless Confidence in it.* If any man finds himself or others apt to go on with Confidence and Security, in sinful Courses, without any fear of God's severe Justice, let him read Chap. VII. Part I. p. 140, &c. also Chap. XI. Part I. p. 192, &c. also § 4. of Chap. VII. Part II. p. 452, &c. and Chap. VI. Part II. p. 397.

A Man

A Man that is tempted to deſpair by the Number and Heinouſneſs of his Sins, may read Chap. I. Part II. p. 237, &c. VIII. *Temptations to Deſpair.*

If a Man feels himſelf paſſionately fond of the Pleaſures and Advantages of this World, or afflicted becauſe he has them not, let him read Chap. IV. Part II. p. 333. IX. *Worldly mindedneſs.*

He that gives himſelf wholly to Purſuits of this Nature, and thinks they will be no hindrance to him in his way to Heaven, let him read Chap. III. Part I. p. 40. &c. alſo § 3, 4. of Ch. IV. Part II. p 355, &c. *Danger of it.*

Particularly,

Againſt Vainglory, read	p. 357, &c.
Againſt Ambition,	p. 340, &c.
Againſt Pride on the Account of noble Birth,	p. 342.
or worldly Wiſdom,	p. 343.
or Beauty,	p. 344.
or Gaiety of Apparel.	p. 346.
Againſt the Love of Riches.	p. 347, &c.
of Senſual Pleaſures,	p. 350, &c.

He that would know how to uſe the World ſafely, and to his own great Advantage, may read § 5. Chap. IV. Part II. p. 368, &c. X. *Right Uſe of the World.*

He that ſlights the Joys of the World to come, provided he may but enjoy the Pleaſures of this Life, or that is but little affected with the Thoughts of Heaven, may read Chap. XII. Part. I. p. 211, &c. XI. *Contempt of the Joys of Heaven.*

If any Perſon takes Offence at thoſe Calamities which ſometimes fall upon the Church of God, or thoſe Sufferings which good Men undergo for keeping the true Faith and a good Conſcience; or, XII. *Offence at the Sufferings of good Men.*

If a Perſon wants proper Conſiderations to prepare and arm him againſt, or to comfort and ſupport him under, Perſecutions and Afflictions, let him read Chap. III. Part II. p. 304, &c. *And Of Perſecutions and Afflictions.*

He that deſires to know the true State and Condition of his Soul as to Spiritual Things, may find ſome helps for the arriving at that Knowledge in Chapters XIII. *Examination of our State.*

Chapters V, VI. Part I. p. 113, &c. and in Ch. III. Part I. p. 40, &c.

XIV. *Of the Difficulties and Labours of a good Life.*

A Perſon that is inclined to Softneſs and Eaſe, and fearful of the Difficulties and Labours of a holy Life, and apt to be ſoon weary of well doing, may read Chap. II. Part II. p. 271, &c.

XV. *Delaying Converſion: or Unwillingneſs to think of Death.*

He that thinks himſelf young, and upon that or any other Account delays his Converſion, may read Chap. X. Part I. p. 176, &c. The ſame Portion of the Book will be of Service to him, who is unwilling to conſider of, and prepare for, his latter End.

When the Reader finds theſe occaſional Meditations, or any of the other Sort, too long for one Reading, he may divide them at his own Diſcretion.